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WAVERLEY NOVELS.

HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

THE PIRATE.

I.

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THE PIRATE.

Nothing in him——
But doth suffer a sea-change.
TEMPEST

INTRODUCTION—(1831.)

"Quoth he, there was a ship."

THIS brief preface may begin like the tale of the Ancient Mariner, since it was on shipboard that the author acquired the very moderate degree of local knowledge and information, both of people and scenery, which he has endeavoured to embody in the romance of the Pirate.

In the summer and autumn of 1814, the author was invited to join a party of Commissioners for the Northern Light-House Service, who proposed making a voyage round the coast of Scotland, and through its various groups of islands, chiefly for the purpose of seeing the condition of the many light-houses under their direction, —edifices so important, whether regarding them as benevolent or political institutions. Among the Commissioners who manage this important public concern, the sheriff of each county of Scotland which borders on the

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sea, holds ex-officio a place at the Board. These gentlemen act in every respect gratuitously, but have the use of an armed yacht, well found and fitted up, when they choose to visit the light-houses. An excellent engineer, Mr. Robert Stevenson, is attached to the Board, to afford the benefit of his professional advice. The author accompanied this expedition as a guest; for Selkirkshire, though it calls him Sheriff, has not, like the kingdom of Bohemia in Corporal Trim's story, a seaport in its circuit, nor its magistrate, of course, any place at the Board of Commissioners,—a circumstance of little consequence where all were old and intimate friends, bred to the same profession, and disposed to accommodate each other in every possible manner.

The nature of the important business which was the principal purpose of the voyage, was connected with the amusement of visiting the leading objects of a traveller's curiosity; for the wild cape, or formidable shelf, which requires to be marked out by a light-house, is generally at no great distance from the most magnificent scenery of rocks, caves, and billows. Our time, too, was at our own disposal, and, as most of us were fresh-water sailors, we could at any time make a fair wind out of a foul one, and run before the gale in quest of some object of curiosity which lay under our lee.

With these purposes of public utility and some personal amusement in view, we left the port of Leith on the 26th July, 1814, ran along the east coast of Scotland, viewing its different curiosities, stood over to Zetland and Orkney, where we were some time detained by the wonders of a country which displayed so much that was new to us; and, having seen what was curious in the Ultima Thule of the ancients, where the sun hardly thought it worth

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while to go to bed, since his rising was at this season so early, we doubled the extreme northern termination of Scotland, and took a rapid survey of the Hebrides, where we found many kind friends. There, that our little expedition might not want the dignity of danger, we were favoured with a distant glimpse of what was said to be an American cruizer, and had opportunity to consider what a pretty figure we should have made had the voyage ended in our being carried captive to the United States. After visiting the romantic shores of Morven, and the vicinity of Oban, we made a run to the coast of Ireland, and visited the Giant's Causeway, that we might compare it with Staffa, which we had surveyed in our course. At length, about the middle of September, we ended our voyage in the Clyde, at the port of Greenock.

And thus terminated our pleasant tour, to which our equipment gave unusual facilities, as the ship's company could form a strong boat's crew, independent of those who might be left on board the vessel, which permitted us the freedom to land wherever our curiosity carried us. Let me add, while reviewing for a moment a sunny portion of my life, that among the six or seven friends who performed this voyage together, some of them doubtless of different tastes and pursuits, and remaining for several weeks on board a small vessel, there never occurred the slightest dispute or disagreement, each seeming anxious to submit his own particular wishes to those of his friends. By this mutual accommodation all the purposes of our little expedition were obtained, while for a time we might have adopted the lines of Allan Cunningham's fine sea-song,

> "The world of waters was our home,
> And merry men were we!"

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But sorrow mixes her memorials with the purest remembrances of pleasure. On returning from the voyage which had proved so satisfactory, I found that fate had deprived her country most unexpectedly of a lady, qualified to adorn the high rank which she held, and who had long admitted me to a share of her friendship. The subsequent loss of one of those comrades who made up the party, and he the most intimate friend I had in the world, casts also its shade on recollections, which, but for these embitterments, would be otherwise so satisfactory.

I may here briefly observe, that my business in this voyage, so far as I could be said to have any, was to endeavour to discover some localities which might be useful in the "Lord of the Isles," a poem with which I was then threatening the public, and which was afterwards printed without attaining remarkable success. But as at the same time the anonymous novel of "Waverley" was making its way to popularity, I already augured the possibility of a second effort in this department of literature, and I saw much in the wild islands of the Orkneys and Zetland, which I judged might be made in the highest degree interesting, should these isles ever become the scene of a narrative of fictitious events. I learned the history of Gow the pirate from an old sibyl, (the subject of the Note at page 118, vol. i.,) whose principal subsistence was by a trade in favourable winds, which she sold to mariners at Stromness. Nothing could be more interesting than the kindness and hospitality of the gentlemen of Zetland, which was to me the more affecting, as several of them had been friends and correspondents of my father.

I was induced to go a generation or two farther back, to find materials from which I might trace the features

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of the old Norwegian Udaller, the Scottish gentry having in general occupied the place of that primitive race, and their language and peculiarities of manner having entirely disappeared. The only difference now to be observed betwixt the gentry of these islands, and those of Scotland in general, is, that the wealth and property is more equally divided among our more northern countrymen, and that there exists among the resident proprietors no men of very great wealth, whose display of its luxuries might render the others discontented with their own lot. From the same cause of general equality of fortunes, and the cheapness of living, which is its natural consequence, I found the officers of a veteran regiment who had maintained the garrison at Fort Charlotte, in Lerwick, discomposed at the idea of being recalled from a country where their pay, however inadequate to the expenses of a capital, was fully adequate to their wants, and it was singular to hear natives of merry England herself regretting their approaching departure from the melancholy isles of the Ultima Thule.

Such are the trivial particulars attending the origin of that publication which took place several years later than the agreeable journey in which it took its rise.

The state of manners which I have introduced in the romance, was necessarily in a great degree imaginary, though founded in some measure on slight hints, which, shewing what was, seemed to give reasonable indication of what must once have been, the tone of the society in these sequestered but interesting islands.

In one respect I was judged somewhat hastily, perhaps, when the character of Norna was pronounced by the critics a mere copy of Meg Merrilies. That I had fallen short of what I wished and desired to express is unques-

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tionable, otherwise my object could not have been so widely mistaken; nor can I yet think that any person who will take the trouble of reading the Pirate with some attention, can fail to trace in Norna,—the victim of remorse and insanity, and the dupe of her own imposture, her mind, too, flooded with all the wild literature and extravagant superstitions of the north,—something distinct from the Dumfries-shire gipsy, whose pretensions to supernatural powers are not beyond those of a Norwood prophetess. The foundations of such a character may be perhaps traced, though it be too true that the necessary superstructure cannot have been raised upon them, otherwise the remark would have been unnecessary. There is also great improbability in the statement of Norna possessing power and opportunity to impress on others that belief in her supernatural powers which distracted her own mind. Yet, amid a very credulous and ignorant population, it is astonishing what success may be attained by an impostor, who is, at the same time, an enthusiast. It is such as to remind us of the couplet which assures us that

> "The pleasure is as great
> In being cheated as to cheat."

Indeed, as I have observed elsewhere, the professed explanation of a tale, where appearances or incidents of a supernatural character are explained on natural causes, has often, in the winding up of the story, a degree of improbability almost equal to an absolute goblin tale. Even the genius of Mrs. Radcliffe could not always surmount this difficulty.

ABBOTSFORD,
1*st May*, 1831.

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

DECEMBER, 1821.

THE purpose of the following Narrative is to give a detailed and accurate account of certain remarkable incidents which took place in the Orkney Islands, concerning which the more imperfect traditions and mutilated records of the country only tell us the following erroneous particulars:—

In the month of January, 1724–5, a vessel, called the Revenge, bearing twenty large guns, and six smaller, commanded by JOHN GOW, or GOFFE, or SMITH, came to the Orkney Islands, and was discovered to be a pirate, by various acts of insolence and villainy, committed by the crew. These were for some time submitted to, the inhabitants of these remote islands not possessing arms nor means of resistance; and so bold was the Captain of these banditti, that he not only came ashore, and gave dancing parties in the village of Stromness, but, before his real character was discovered, engaged the affections, and received the troth-plight of a young lady possessed of some property. A patriotic individual, JAMES FEA, younger of Clestron, formed the plan of securing the buccanier, which he effected by a mixture of courage and address, in consequence chiefly of Gow's vessel having gone on shore near the harbour of Calfsound on the

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Island of Eda, not far distant from a house then inhabited by Mr. FEA. In the various stratagems by which Mr. FEA contrived finally, at the peril of his life, (they being well armed and desperate,) to make the whole pirates his prisoners, he was much aided by Mr. JAMES LAING, the grandfather of the late MALCOLM LAING, Esq., the acute and ingenious historian of Scotland during the 17th century.

Gow, and others of his crew, suffered, by sentence of the High Court of Admiralty, the punishment their crimes had long deserved. He conducted himself with great audacity when before the Court; and, from an account of the matter, by an eye-witness, seems to have been subjected to some unusual severities, in order to compel him to plead. The words are these: "JOHN GOW would not plead, for which he was brought to the bar, and the Judge ordered that his thumbs should be squeezed by two men, with a whip-cord, till it did break; and then it should be doubled, till it did again break, and then liad threefold, and that the executioners should pull with their whole strength; which sentence Gow endured with a great deal of boldness." The next morning, (27th May, 1725,) when he had seen the terrible preparations for pressing him to death, his courage gave way, and he told the Marshal of Court, that he would not have given so much trouble, had he been assured of not being hanged in chains. He was then tried, condemned, and executed, with others of his crew.

It is said, that the lady whose affections Gow had engaged, went up to London to see him before his death, and that, arriving too late, she had the courage to request a sight of his dead body; and then, touching the hand of the corpse, she formally resumed the troth-plight which

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she had bestowed. Without going through this ceremony she could not, according to the superstition of the country, have escaped a visit from the ghost of her departed lover, in the event of her bestowing upon any living suitor the faith which she had plighted to the dead. This part of the legend may serve as a curious commentary on the fine Scottish ballad, which begins,—

"There came a ghost to Margaret's door," &c.

The common account of this incident farther bears, that Mr. FEA, the spirited individual by whose exertions Gow's career of iniquity was cut short, was so far from receiving any reward from Government, that he could not obtain even countenance enough to protect him against a variety of sham suits, raised against him by Newgate solicitors, who acted in the name of Gow, and others of the pirate crew; and the various expenses, vexatious prosecutions, and other legal consequences, in which his gallant exploit involved him, utterly ruined his fortune, and his family; making his memory a notable example to all who shall in future take pirates on their own authority.

It is to be supposed, for the honour of George the First's Government, that the last circumstance, as well as the dates, and other particulars of the commonly received story, are inaccurate, since they will be found totally irreconcilable with the following veracious narrative, compiled from materials to which he himself alone has had access, by

THE AUTHOR OF WAVERLEY.

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THE PIRATE.

CHAPTER I.

The storm had ceased its wintry roar,
Hoarse dash the billows of the sea;
But who on Thule's desert shore,
Cries, Have I burnt my harp for thee?

MACNEIL.

THAT long, narrow, and irregular island, usually called the Mainland of Zetland, because it is by far the largest of that Archipelago, terminates, as is well known to the mariners who navigate the stormy seas which surround the Thule of the ancients, in a cliff of immense height,

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entitled Sumburgh-Head, which presents its bare scalp and naked sides to the weight of a tremendous surge, forming the extreme point of the isle to the south-east. This lofty promontory is constantly exposed to the current of a strong and furious tide, which, setting in betwixt the Orkney and Zetland Islands, and running with force only inferior to that of the Pentland Frith, takes its name from the headland we have mentioned, and is called the Roost of Sumburgh; *roost* being the phrase assigned in these isles to currents of this description.

On the land side, the promontory is covered with short grass, and slopes steeply down to a little isthmus, upon which the sea has encroached in creeks, which, advancing from either side of the island, gradually work their way forward, and seem as if in a short time they would form a junction, and altogether insulate Sumburgh-Head, when what is now a cape, will become a lonely mountain islet, severed from the mainland, of which it is at present the terminating extremity.

Man, however, had in former days considered this as a remote or unlikely event; for a Norwegian chief of other times, or as other accounts said, and as the name of Jarlshof seemed to imply, an ancient Earl of the Orkneys had selected this neck of land as the place for establishing a mansion-house. It has been long entirely deserted, and the vestiges only can be discerned with difficulty; for the loose sand, borne on the tempestuous gales of these stormy regions, has overblown, and almost buried, the ruins of the buildings; but in the end of the seventeenth century, a part of the Earl's mansion was still entire and habitable. It was a rude building of rough stone, with nothing about it to gratify the eye, or to excite the imagination; a large old-fashioned narrow house, with a very

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steep roof, covered with flags composed of gray sandstone, would perhaps convey the best idea of the place to a modern reader. The windows were few, very small in size, and distributed up and down the building with utter contempt of regularity. Against the main structure had rested, in former times, certain smaller compartments of the mansion-house, containing offices, or subordinate apartments, necessary for the accommodation of the Earl's retainers and menials. But these had become ruinous; and the rafters had been taken down for firewood, or for other purposes; the walls had given way in many places; and, to complete the devastation, the sand had already drifted amongst the ruins, and filled up what had been once the chambers they contained, to the depth of two or three feet.

Amid this desolation, the inhabitants of Jarlshof had contrived, by constant labour and attention, to keep in order a few roods of land, which had been enclosed as a garden, and which, sheltered by the walls of the house itself, from the relentless sea-blast, produced such vegetables as the climate could bring forth, or rather as the sea-gale would permit to grow; for these islands experience even less of the rigour of cold than is encountered on the mainland of Scotland; but, unsheltered by a wall of some sort or other, it is scarce possible to raise even the most ordinary culinary vegetables; and as for shrubs or trees, they are entirely out of the question, such is the force of the sweeping sea-blast.

At a short distance from the mansion, and near to the sea-beach, just where the creek forms a sort of imperfect harbour, in which lay three or four fishing-boats, there were a few most wretched cottages for the inhabitants and tenants of the township of Jarlshof, who held the whole district of the landlord upon such terms as were in

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those days usually granted to persons of this description, and which, of course, were hard enough. The landlord himself resided upon an estate which he possessed in a more eligible situation, in a different part of the island, and seldom visited his possessions at Sumburgh-Head. He was an honest, plain Zetland gentleman, somewhat passionate, the necessary result of being surrounded by dependents; and somewhat over-convivial in his habits, the consequence, perhaps, of having too much time at his disposal; but frank-tempered and generous to his people, and kind and hospitable to strangers. He was descended also of an old and noble Norwegian family; a circumstance which rendered him dearer to the lower orders, most of whom are of the same race; while the lairds, or proprietors, are generally of Scottish extraction, who, at that early period, were still considered as strangers and intruders. Magnus Troil, who deduced his descent from the very Earl who was supposed to have founded Jarlshof, was peculiarly of this opinion.

The present inhabitants of Jarlshof had experienced, on several occasions, the kindness and good will of the proprietor of the territory. When Mr. Mertoun—such was the name of the present inhabitant of the old mansion—first arrived in Zetland, some years before the story commences, he had been received at the house of Mr. Troil with that warm and cordial hospitality for which the islands are distinguished. No one asked him whence he came, where he was going, what was his purpose in visiting so remote a corner of the empire, or what was likely to be the term of his stay. He arrived a perfect stranger, yet was instantly overpowered by a succession of invitations; and in each house which he visited, he found a home as long as he chose to accept it, and lived

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as one of the family, unnoticed and unnoticing, until he thought proper to remove to some other dwelling. This apparent indifference to the rank, character, and qualities of their guest, did not arise from apathy on the part of his kind hosts, for the islanders had their full share of natural curiosity; but their delicacy deemed it would be an infringement upon the laws of hospitality, to ask questions which their guest might have found it difficult or unpleasing to answer; and instead of endeavouring, as is usual in other countries, to wring out of Mr. Mertoun such communications as he might find it agreeable to withhold, the considerate Zetlanders contented themselves with eagerly gathering up such scraps of information as could be collected in the course of conversation.

But the rock in an Arabian desert is not more reluctant to afford water, than Mr. Basil Mertoun was niggard in imparting his confidence, even incidentally; and certainly the politeness of the gentry of Thule was never put to a more severe test than when they felt that good-breeding enjoined them to abstain from inquiring into the situation of so mysterious a personage.

All that was actually known of him was easily summed up. Mr. Mertoun had come to Lerwick, then rising into some importance, but not yet acknowledged as the principal town of the island, in a Dutch vessel, accompanied only by his son, a handsome boy of about fourteen years old. His own age might exceed forty. The Dutch skipper introduced him to some of the very good friends with whom he used to barter gin and gingerbread for little Zetland bullocks, smoked geese, and stockings of lambs-wool; and although Meinheer could only say, that "Meinheer Mertoun hab bay his bassage like one gentlemans, and hab given a Kreitzdollar beside to the crew,"

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this introduction served to establish the Dutchman's passenger in a respectable circle of acquaintances, which gradually enlarged, as it appeared that the stranger was a man of considerable acquirements.

This discovery was made almost *per force*; for Mertoun was as unwilling to speak upon general subjects, as upon his own affairs. But he was sometimes led into discussions, which shewed, as it were in spite of himself, the scholar and the man of the world; and, at other times, as if in requital of the hospitality which he experienced, he seemed to compel himself, against his fixed nature, to enter into the society of those around him, especially when it assumed the grave, melancholy, or satirical cast, which best suited the temper of his own mind. Upon such occasions, the Zetlanders were universally of opinion that he must have had an excellent education, neglected only in one striking particular, namely, that Mr. Mertoun scarce knew the stem of a ship from the stern; and in the management of a boat, a cow could not be more ignorant. It seemed astonishing such gross ignorance of the most necessary art of life (in the Zetland Isles at least) should subsist along with his accomplishments in other respects; but so it was.

Unless called forth in the manner we have mentioned, the habits of Basil Mertoun were retired and gloomy. From loud mirth he instantly fled; and even the moderated cheerfulness of a friendly party, had the invariable effect of throwing him into deeper dejection than even his usual demeanour indicated.

Women are always particularly desirous of investigating mystery, and of alleviating melancholy, especially when these circumstances are united in a handsome man about the prime of life. It is possible, therefore, that

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amongst the fair-haired and blue-eyed daughters of Thule this mysterious and pensive stranger might have found some one to take upon herself the task of consolation, had he shewn any willingness to accept such kindly offices; but, far from doing so, he seemed even to shun the presence of the sex, to which in our distresses, whether of mind or body, we generally apply for pity and comfort.

To these peculiarities Mr. Mertoun added another, which was particularly disagreeable to his host and principal patron, Magnus Troil. This magnate of Zetland, descended by the father's side, as we have already said, from an ancient Norwegian family by the marriage of its representative with a Danish lady, held the devout opinion that a cup of Geneva or Nantz was specific against all cares and afflictions whatever. These were remedies to which Mr. Mertoun never applied; his drink was water, and water alone, and no persuasion or entreaties could induce him to taste any stronger beverage than was afforded by the pure spring. Now this Magnus Troil could not tolerate; it was a defiance to the ancient northern laws of conviviality, which, for his own part, he had so rigidly observed, that although he was wont to assert that he had never in his life gone to bed drunk, (that is, in his own sense of the word,) it would have been impossible to prove that he had ever resigned himself to slumber in a state of actual and absolute sobriety. It may be therefore asked, What did this stranger bring into society to compensate the displeasure given by his austere and abstemious habits? He had, in the first place, that manner and self-importance which mark a person of some consequence; and although it was conjectured that he could not be rich, yet it was certainly known by his expenditure that neither was he absolutely poor. He had,

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besides, some powers of conversation, when, as we have already hinted, he chose to exert them, and his misanthropy or aversion to the business and intercourse of ordinary life, was often expressed in an antithetical manner, which passed for wit, when better was not to be had. Above all, Mr. Mertoun's secret seemed impenetrable, and his presence had all the interest of a riddle, which men love to read over and over, because they cannot find out the meaning of it.

Notwithstanding these recommendations, Mertoun differed in so many material points from his host, that after he had been for some time a guest at his principal residence, Magnus Troil was agreeably surprised when, one evening after they had sat two hours in absolute silence, drinking brandy and water,—that is, Magnus drinking the alcohol, and Mertoun the element,—the guest asked his host's permission to occupy, as his tenant, this deserted mansion of Jarlshof, at the extremity of the territory called Dumrossness, and situated just beneath Sumburgh-Head. "I shall be handsomely rid of him," quoth Magnus to himself, "and his kill-joy visage will never again stop the bottle in its round. His departure will ruin me in lemons, however, for his mere look was quite sufficient to sour a whole ocean of punch."

Yet the kind-hearted Zetlander generously and disinterestedly remonstrated with Mr. Mertoun on the solitude and inconveniences to which he was about to subject himself. "There were scarcely," he said, "even the most necessary articles of furniture in the old house—there was no society within many miles—for provisions, the principal article of food would be sour sillocks, and his only company gulls and gannets."

"My good friend," replied Mertoun, "if you could have

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named a circumstance which would render the residence more eligible to me than any other, it is that there would be neither human luxury nor human society near the place of my retreat; a shelter from the weather for my own head, and for the boy's, is all I seek for. So name your rent, Mr. Troil, and let me be your tenant at Jarlshof."

"Rent?" answered the Zetlander; "why, no great rent for an old house which no one has lived in since my mother's time—God rest her!—and as for shelter, the old walls are thick enough, and will bear many a bang yet. But, Heaven love you, Mr. Mertoun, think what you are purposing. For one of us to live at Jarlshof, were a wild scheme enough; but you, who are from another country, whether English, Scotch, or Irish, no one can tell——"

"Nor does it greatly matter," said Mertoun, somewhat abruptly.

"Not a herring's scale," answered the Laird; "only that I like you the better for being no Scot, as I trust you are not one. Hither they have come like the clack-geese—every chamberlain has brought over a flock of his own name, and his own hatching, for what I know, and here they roost for ever—catch them returning to their own barren Highlands or Lowlands, when once they have tasted our Zetland beef, and seen our bonny *voes* and lochs. No, sir," (here Magnus proceeded with great animation, sipping from time to time the half-diluted spirit, which at the same time animated his resentment against the intruders, and enabled him to endure the mortifying reflection which it suggested,)—"No, sir, the ancient days and the genuine manners of these Islands are no more; for our ancient possessors,—our Patersons, our

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Feas, our Schlagbrenners, our Thorbiorns, have given place to Giffords, Scotts, Mouats, men whose names bespeak them or their ancestors strangers to the soil which we the Troils have inhabited long before the days of Turf-Einar, who first taught these Isles the mystery of burning peat for fuel, and who has been handed down to a grateful posterity by a name which records the discovery."

This was a subject upon which the potentate of Jarlshof was usually very diffuse, and Mertoun saw him enter upon it with pleasure, because he knew he should not be called upon to contribute any aid to the conversation, and might therefore indulge his own saturnine humour while the Norwegian Zetlander declaimed on the change of times and inhabitants. But just as Magnus had arrived at the melancholy conclusion, "how probable it was, that in another century scarce a *merk*—scarce even an *ure* of land, would be in the possession of the Norse inhabitants, the true Udallers * of Zetland," he recollected the circumstances of his guest, and stopped suddenly short. "I do not say all this," he added, interrupting himself, "as if I were unwilling that you should settle on my estate, Mr. Mertoun—But for Jarlshof—the place is a wild one—Come from where you will, I warrant you will say, like other travellers, you came from a better climate than ours, for so say you all. And yet you think of a retreat which the very natives run away from. Will you not take your glass?"—(This was to be considered as interjectional,)—"then here's to you."

"My good sir," answered Mertoun, "I am indifferent

* The Udallers are the *allodial* possessors of Zetland, who hold their possessions under the old Norwegian law, instead of the feudal tenures introduced among them from Scotland.

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to climate; if there is but air enough to fill my lungs, I care not if it be the breath of Arabia or of Lapland."

"Air enough you may have," answered Magnus, "no lack of that—somewhat damp, strangers allege it to be, but we know a corrective for that—Here's to you, Mr. Mertoun—You must learn to *do so*, and to smoke a pipe; and then, as you say, you will find the air of Zetland equal to that of Arabia. But have you seen Jarlshof?"

The stranger intimated that he had not.

"Then," replied Magnus, "you have no idea of your undertaking. If you think it a comfortable roadstead like this, with the house situated on the side of an inland voe,* that brings the herrings up to your door, you are mistaken, my heart. At Jarlshof you will see nought but the wild waves tumbling on the bare rocks, and the Roost of Sumburgh running at the rate of fifteen knots an hour."

"I shall see nothing at least of the current of human passions," replied Mertoun.

"You will hear nothing but the clanging and screaming of scarts, sheer-waters, and sea-gulls, from daybreak till sunset."

"I will compound, my friend," replied the stranger, "so that I do not hear the chattering of women's tongues."

"Ah," said the Norman, "that is because you hear just now my little Minna and Brenda singing in the garden with your Mordaunt. Now, I would rather listen to their little voices, than the skylark which I once heard in Caithness, or the nightingale that I have read of.—What will the girls do for want of their playmate Mordaunt?"

"They will shift for themselves," answered Mertoun; 'younger or elder they will find playmates or dupes.—

* Salt-water lake.

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But the question is, Mr. Troil, will you let to me, as your tenant, this old mansion of Jarlshof?"

"Gladly, since you make it your option to live in a spot so desolate."

"And as for the rent?" continued Mertoun.

"The rent?" replied Magnus; "hum—why, you must have the bit of *plantie cruive*,* which they once called a garden, and a right in the *scathold*, and a sixpenny merk of land, that the tenants may fish for you;—eight *lispunds*† of butter, and eight shillings sterling yearly, is not too much?"

Mr. Mertoun agreed to terms so moderate, and from thenceforward resided chiefly at the solitary mansion which we have described in the beginning of this chapter, conforming not only without complaint, but, as it seemed, with a sullen pleasure, to all the privations which so wild and desolate a situation necessarily imposed on its inhabitant.

* Patch of ground for vegetables. The liberal custom of the country permits any person, who has occasion for such a convenience, to select out of the unenclosed moorland a small patch, which he surrounds with a drystone wall, and cultivates as a kail-yard, till he exhausts the soil with cropping, and then he deserts it, and encloses another. This liberty is so far from inferring an invasion of the right of proprietor and tenant, that the last degree of contempt is inferred of an avaricious man, when a Zetlander says, he would not hold a *plantie cruive* of him.

† A lispund is about thirty pounds English, and the value is averaged by Dr. Edmonston at ten shillings sterling.

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CHAPTER II.

'Tis not alone the scene—the man, Anselmo,
The man finds sympathies in these wild wastes,
And roughly tumbling seas, which fairer views
And smoother waves deny him.

ANCIENT DRAMA.

THE few inhabitants of the township of Jarlshof had at first heard with alarm, that a person of rank superior to their own was come to reside in the ruinous tenement, which they still called the Castle. In those days (for the present times are greatly altered for the better) the presence of a superior, in such a situation, was almost certain to be attended with additional burdens and exactions, for which, under one pretext or another, feudal customs furnished a thousand apologies. By each of these, a part of the tenants' hard-won and precarious profits was diverted for the use of their powerful neighbour and superior, the tacksman, as he was called. But the sub-tenants speedily found that no oppression of this kind was to be apprehended at the hands of Basil Mertoun. His own means, whether large or small, were at least fully adequate to his expenses, which, so far as regarded his habits of life, were of the most frugal description. The luxuries of a few books, and some philosophical instruments, with which he was supplied from London as occasion offered, seemed to indicate a degree of wealth unusual in

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these islands; but on the other hand, the table and the accommodations at Jarlshof, did not exceed what was maintained by a Zetland proprietor of the most inferior description.

The tenants of the hamlet troubled themselves very little about the quality of their superior, as soon as they found that their situation was rather to be mended than rendered worse by his presence; and once relieved from the apprehension of his tyrannizing over them, they laid their heads together to make the most of him by various petty tricks of overcharge and extortion, which for a while the stranger submitted to with the most philosophic indifference. An incident, however, occurred, which put his character in a new light, and effectually checked all future efforts at extravagant imposition.

A dispute arose in the kitchen of the Castle betwixt an old governante, who acted as housekeeper to Mr. Mertoun, and Sweyn Erickson, as good a Zetlander as ever rowed a boat to the *haaf* fishing;* which dispute, as is usual in such cases, was maintained with such increasing heat and vociferation as to reach the ears of the master, (as he was called,) who, secluded in a solitary turret, was deeply employed in examining the contents of a new package of books from London, which, after long expectation, had found its way to Hull, from thence by a whaling vessel to Lerwick, and so to Jarlshof. With more than the usual thrill of indignation which indolent people always feel when roused into action on some unpleasant occasion, Mertoun descended to the scene of contest, and so suddenly, peremptorily, and strictly, inquired into the cause of dispute, that the parties, notwith-

* *i. e.* The deep-sea fishing, in distinction to that which is practised along shore.

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standing every evasion which they attempted, became unable to disguise from him that their difference respected the several interests to which the honest governante, and no less honest fisherman, were respectively entitled, in an overcharge of about one hundred per cent on a bargain of rock-cod, purchased by the former from the latter, for the use of the family at Jarlshof.

When this was fairly ascertained and confessed, Mr. Mertoun stood looking upon the culprits with eyes in which the utmost scorn seemed to contend with awakening passion. "Hark you, ye old hag," said he at length to the housekeeper, "avoid my house this instant! and know that I dismiss you, not for being a liar, a thief, and an ungrateful quean,—for these are qualities as proper to you as your name of woman,—but for daring, in my house, to scold above your breath.—And for you, you rascal, who suppose you may cheat a stranger as you would *flinch* * a whale, know that I am well acquainted with the rights which, by delegation from your master, Magnus Troil, I can exercise over you, if I will. Provoke me to a certain pitch, and you shall learn, to your cost, I can break your rest as easily as you can interrupt my leisure. I know the meaning of *scat*, and *wattle*, and *hawkhen*, and *hagalef*, and every other exaction by which your lords, in ancient and modern days, have wrung your withers; nor is there one of you that shall not rue the day that you could not be content with robbing me of my money, but must also break in on my leisure with your atrocious northern clamour, that rivals in discord the screaming of a flight of Arctic gulls."

Nothing better occurred to Sweyn, in answer to this

* The operation of slicing the blubber from the bones of the whale, is called, technically, *flinching*.

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objurgation, than the preferring a humble request that his honour would be pleased to keep the cod-fish without payment, and say no more about the matter; but by this time Mr. Mertoun had worked up his passions into an ungovernable rage, and with one hand he threw the money at the fisherman's head, while with the other he pelted him out of the apartment with his own fish, which he finally flung out of doors after him.

There was so much of appalling and tyrannic fury in the stranger's manner on this occasion, that Sweyn neither stopped to collect the money nor take back his commodity, but fled at a precipitate rate to the small hamlet, to tell his comrades that if they provoked Master Mertoun any further, he would turn an absolute Pate Stewart* on their hand, and head and hang without either judgment or mercy.

Hither also came the discarded housekeeper, to consult with her neighbours and kindred (for she too was a native of the village) what she should do to regain the desirable situation from which she had been so suddenly expelled. The old Ranzellaar of the village, who had the voice most potential in the deliberations of the township, after hearing what had happened, pronounced that Sweyn Erickson had gone too far in raising the market upon Mr. Mertoun; and that whatever pretext the tacksman might assume for thus giving way to his anger, the real grievance must have been the charging the rock cod-fish at a penny instead of a halfpenny a-pound; he therefore exhorted all the community never to raise their exactions in future beyond the proportion of threepence upon the

* Meaning, probably, Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, executed for tyranny and oppression practised on the inhabitants of these remote islands, in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

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shilling, at which rate their master at the Castle could not reasonably be expected to grumble, since, as he was disposed to do them no harm, it was reasonable to think that, in a moderate way, he had no objection to do them good. "And three upon twelve," said the experienced Ranzellaar, "is a decent and moderate profit, and will bring with it God's blessing and Saint Ronald's."

Proceeding upon the tariff thus judiciously recommended to them, the inhabitants of Jarlshof cheated Mertoun in future only to the moderate extent of twenty-five per cent; a rate to which all nabobs, army-contractors, speculators in the funds, and others, whom recent and rapid success has enabled to settle in the country upon a great scale, ought to submit, as very reasonable treatment at the hand of their rustic neighbours. Mertoun at least seemed of that opinion, for he gave himself no further trouble upon the subject of his household expenses.

The conscript fathers of Jarlshof, having settled their own matters, took next under their consideration the case of Swertha, the banished matron who had been expelled from the Castle, whom, as an experienced and useful ally, they were highly desirous to restore to her office of housekeeper, should that be found possible. But as their wisdom here failed them, Swertha, in despair, had recourse to the good offices of Mordaunt Mertoun, with whom she had acquired some favour by her knowledge in old Norwegian ballads, and dismal tales concerning the Trows or Drows, (the dwarfs of the Scalds,) with whom superstitious eld had peopled many a lonely cavern and brown dale in Dunrossness, as in every other district of Zetland. "Swertha," said the youth, "I can do but little for you, but you may do something for yourself.

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My father's passion resembles the fury of those ancient champions, those Berserkars, you sing songs about."

"Ay, ay, fish of my heart," replied the old woman, with a pathetic whine; "the Berserkars were champions who lived before the blessed days of Saint Olave, and who used to run like madmen on swords, and spears, and harpoons, and muskets, and snap them all into pieces, as a finner * would go through a herring-net, and then, when the fury went off, they were as weak and unstable as water." †

"That's the very thing, Swertha," said Mordaunt. "Now, my father never likes to think of his passion after it is over, and is so much of a Berserkar, that, let him be desperate as he will to-day, he will not care about it to-morrow. Therefore he has not filled up your place in the household at the Castle, and not a mouthful of warm food has been dressed there since you went away, and not a morsel of bread baked, but we have lived just upon whatever cold thing came to hand. Now, Swertha, I will be your warrant that if you go boldly up to the Castle, and enter upon the discharge of your duties as usual, you will never hear a single word from him."

Swertha hesitated at first to obey this bold counsel. She said, "to her thinking, Mr. Mertoun, when he was angry, looked more like a fiend than any Berserkar of them all; that the fire flashed from his eyes, and the foam flew from his lips; and that it would be a plain

* *Finner*, small whale.

† The sagas of the Scalds are full of descriptions of these champions, and do not permit us to doubt that the Berserkars, so called from fighting without armour, used some physical means of working themselves into a frenzy, during which they possessed the strength and energy of madness. The Indian warriors are well known to do the same by dint of opium and bang.

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tempting of Providence to put herself again in such a venture."

But, on the encouragement which she received from the son, she determined at length once more to face the parent; and dressing herself in her ordinary household attire, for so Mordaunt particularly recommended, she slipped into the Castle, and presently resuming the various and numerous occupations which devolved on her, seemed as deeply engaged in household cares as if she had never been out of office.

The first day of her return to her duty, Swertha made no appearance in presence of her master, but trusted that, after his three days' diet on cold meat, a hot dish, dressed with the best of her simple skill, might introduce her favourably to his recollection. When Mordaunt had reported that his father had taken no notice of this change of diet, and when she herself observed that, in passing and repassing him occasionally, her appearance produced no effect upon her singular master, she began to imagine that the whole affair had escaped Mr. Mertoun's memory, and was active in her duty as usual. Neither was she convinced of the contrary until one day, when, happening somewhat to elevate her tone in a dispute with the other maid-servant, her master, who at that time passed the place of contest, eyed her with a strong glance, and pronounced the single word *Remember!* in a tone which taught Swertha the government of her tongue for many weeks after.

If Mertoun was whimsical in his mode of governing his household, he seemed no less so in his plan of educating his son. He shewed the youth but few symptoms of parental affection; yet, in his ordinary state of mind, the improvement of Mordaunt's education seemed to be the

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utmost object of his life. He had both books and information sufficient to discharge the task of tutor in the ordinary branches of knowledge; and in this capacity was regular, calm, and strict, not to say severe, in exacting from his pupil the attention necessary for his profiting. But in the perusal of history, to which their attention was frequently turned, as well as in the study of classic authors, there often occurred facts or sentiments which produced an instant effect upon Mertoun's mind, and brought on him suddenly what Swertha, Sweyn, and even Mordaunt, came to distinguish by the name of his dark hour. He was aware, in the usual case, of its approach, and retreated to an inner apartment, into which he never permitted even Mordaunt to enter. Here he would abide in seclusion for days, and even weeks, only coming out at uncertain times, to take such food as they had taken care to leave within his reach, which he used in wonderfully small quantities. At other times, and especially during the winter solstice, when almost every person spends the gloomy time within doors in feasting and merriment, this unhappy man would wrap himself in a dark-coloured sea-cloak, and wander out along the stormy beach, or upon the desolate heath, indulging his own gloomy and wayward reveries under the inclement sky, the rather that he was then most sure to wander unencountered and unobserved.

As Mordaunt grew older, he learned to note the particular signs which preceded these fits of gloomy despondency, and to direct such precautions as might insure his unfortunate parent from ill-timed interruption, (which had always the effect of driving him to fury,) while, at the same time, full provision was made for his subsistence. Mordaunt perceived that at such periods the melancholy

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fit of his father was greatly prolonged, if he chanced to present himself to his eyes while the dark hour was upon him. Out of respect, therefore, to his parent, as well as to indulge the love of active exercise and of amusement natural to his period of life, Mordaunt used often to absent himself altogether from the mansion of Jarlshof, and even from the district, secure that his father, if the dark hour passed away in his absence, would be little inclined to inquire how his son had disposed of his leisure, so that he was sure he had not watched his own weak moments; that being the subject on which he entertained the utmost jealousy.

At such times, therefore, all the sources of amusement which the country afforded, were open to the younger Mertoun, who, in these intervals of his education, had an opportunity to give full scope to the energies of a bold, active, and daring character. He was often engaged with the youth of the hamlet in those desperate sports to which the "dreadful trade of the samphire-gatherer" is like a walk upon level ground—often joined those midnight excursions upon the face of the giddy cliffs, to secure the eggs or the young of the sea-fowl; and in these daring adventures displayed an address, presence of mind, and activity, which in one so young, and not a native of the country, astonished the oldest fowlers.*

At other times, Mordaunt accompanied Sweyn and

* Fatal accidents, however, sometimes happen. When I visited the Fair Isle in 1814, a poor lad of fourteen had been killed by a fall from the rocks about a fortnight before our arrival. The accident happened almost within sight of his mother, who was casting peats at no great distance. The body fell into the sea, and was seen no more. But the islanders account this an honourable mode of death; and as the children begin the practice of climbing very early, fewer accidents occur than might be expected.

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other fishermen in their long and perilous expeditions to the distant and deep sea, learning under their direction the management of the boat, in which they equal, or excel, perhaps, any natives of the British empire. This exercise had charms for Mordaunt, independently of the fishing alone.

At this time, the old Norwegian sagas were much remembered, and often rehearsed, by the fishermen, who still preserved among themselves the ancient Norse tongue, which was the speech of their forefathers. In the dark romance of those Scandinavian tales, lay much that was captivating to a youthful ear; and the classic fables of antiquity were rivalled at least, if not excelled, in Mordaunt's opinion, by the strange legends of Berserkars, of Sea-kings, of dwarfs, giants, and sorcerers, which he heard from the native Zetlanders. Often the scenes around him were assigned as the localities of the wild poems, which, half-recited, half-chanted by voices as hoarse, if not so loud, as the waves over which they floated, pointed out the very bay on which they sailed as the scene of a bloody sea-fight; the scarce-seen heap of stones that bristled over the projecting cape, as the dun, or castle, of some potent earl or noted pirate; the distant and solitary gray stone on the lonely moor, as marking the grave of a hero; the wild cavern, up which the sea rolled in heavy, broad, and unbroken billows, as the dwelling of some noted sorceress.*

* Mr. Baikie of Tankerness, a most respectable inhabitant of Kirkwall, and an Orkney proprietor, assured me of the following curious fact:—

A clergyman, who was not long deceased, remembered well when some remnants of the Norse were still spoken in the island called North Ronaldshaw. When Gray's Ode, entitled the "Fatal Sisters," was first published, or at least first reached that remote island, the reverend

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The ocean also had its mysteries, the effect of which was aided by the dim twilight, through which it was imperfectly seen for more than half the year. Its bottomless

gentleman had the well-judged curiosity to read it to some of the old persons of the isle, as a poem which regarded the history of their own country. They listened with great attention to the preliminary stanzas:—

"Now the storm begins to lour,
Haste the loom of hell prepare,
Iron sleet of arrowy shower
Hurtles in the darken'd air."

But when they had heard a verse or two more, they interrupted the reader, telling him they knew the song well in the Norse language, and had often sung it to him when he asked them for an old song. They called it the Magicians; or the Enchantresses. It would have been singular news to the elegant translator, when executing his version from the text of Bartholine, to have learned that the Norse original was still preserved by tradition in a remote corner of the British dominions. The circumstance will probably justify what is said in the text concerning the traditions of the inhabitants of those remote isles, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Even yet, though the Norse language is entirely disused, except in so far as particular words and phrases are still retained, these fishers of the Ultima Thule are a generation much attached to these ancient legends. Of this the author learned a singular instance.

About twenty years ago, a missionary clergyman had taken the resolution of traversing those wild islands, where he supposed there might be a lack of religious instruction, which he believed himself capable of supplying. After being some days at sea in an open boat, he arrived at North Ronaldshaw, where his appearance excited great speculation. He was a very little man, dark-complexioned, and from the fatigue he had sustained, in removing from one island to another, appeared before them ill-dressed and unshaved; so that the inhabitants set him down as one of the Ancient Picts, or, as they call them with the usual strong guttural, Peghts. How they might have received the poor preacher in this character, was at least dubious; and the schoolmaster of the parish, who had given quarters to the fatigued traveller, set off to consult with Mr. Stevenson, the able and ingenious engineer of the Scottish Light-House Service, who chanced to be on the island. As his skill and knowledge were in the highest repute, it was conceived that Mr. S. could decide at once whether the stranger

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depths and secret caves contained, according to the account of Sweyn and others, skilled in legendary lore, such wonders as modern navigators reject with disdain. In the quiet moonlight bay, where the waves came rippling to the shore, upon a bed of smooth sand intermingled with shells, the mermaid was still seen to glide along the waters by moonlight, and, mingling her voice with the sighing breeze, was often heard to sing of subterranean wonders, or to chant prophecies of future events. The kraken, that hugest of living things, was still supposed to cumber the recesses of the Northern Ocean; and often, when some fog-bank covered the sea at a distance, the eye of the experienced boatmen saw the horns of the monstrous leviathan welking and waving amidst the wreaths of mist, and bore away with all press of oar and sail, lest the sudden suction, occasioned by the sinking of the monstrous mass to the bottom, should drag within the grasp of its multifarious feelers his own frail skiff. The sea-snake was also known, which, arising out of the depths of ocean, stretches to the skies his enormous neck, covered with a mane like that of a war-horse, and with his broad

was a Peght, or ought to be treated as such. Mr. S. was so good-natured as to attend the summons, with the view of rendering the preacher some service. The poor missionary, who had watched for three nights, was now fast asleep, little dreaming what odious suspicions were current respecting him. The inhabitants were assembled round the door. Mr. S., understanding the traveller's condition, declined disturbing him, upon which the islanders produced a pair of very little uncouth-looking boots, with prodigiously thick soles, and appealed to him whether it was possible such articles of raiment could belong to any one but a Peght. Mr. S., finding the prejudices of the natives so strong, was induced to enter the sleeping apartment of the traveller, and was surprised to recognise in the supposed Peght a person whom he had known in his worldly profession of an Edinburgh shop-keeper, before he had assumed his present profession. Of course he was enabled to refute all suspicions of Peghtism.

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glittering eyes, raised mast-head high, looks out, as it seems, for plunder or for victims.

Many prodigious stories of these marine monsters, and of many others less known, were then universally received among the Zetlanders, whose descendants have not as yet by any means abandoned faith in them.*

* I have said, in the text, that the wondrous tales told by Pontoppidan, the Archbishop of Upsal, shall find believers in the Northern Archipelago. It is in vain they are cancelled even in the later editions of Guthrie's Grammar, of which instructive work they used to form the chapter far most attractive to juvenile readers. But the same causes which probably gave birth to the legends concerning mermaids, sea-snakes, krakens, and other marvellous inhabitants of the Northern Ocean, are still afloat in those climates where they took their rise. They had their origin probably from the eagerness of curiosity manifested by our elegant poetess, Mrs. Hemans:—

"What hid'st thou in thy treasure-caves and cells,
Thou ever-sounding and mysterious sea?"

The additional mystic gloom which rests on these northern billows for half the year, joined to the imperfect glance obtained of occasional objects, encourage the timid or the fanciful to give way to imagination, and frequently to shape out a distinct story from some object half seen and imperfectly examined. Thus, some years since, a large object was seen in the beautiful Bay of Scalloway in Zetland, so much in vulgar opinion resembling the kraken, that though it might be distinguished for several days, if the exchange of darkness to twilight can be termed so, yet the hardy boatmen shuddered to approach it, for fear of being drawn down by the suction supposed to attend its sinking. It was probably the hull of some vessel which had foundered at sea.

The belief in mermaids, so fanciful and pleasing in itself, is ever and anon refreshed by a strange tale from the remote shores of some solitary islet.

The author heard a mariner of some reputation in his class vouch for having seen the celebrated sea-serpent. It appeared, so far as could be guessed, to be about a hundred feet long, with the wild mane and fiery eyes which old writers ascribe to the monster; but it is not unlikely the spectator might, in the doubtful light, be deceived by the appearance of a good Norway log floating on the waves. I have only to add, that the remains of an animal, supposed to belong to this latter species, were driven on shore in the Zetland Isles, within the recol-

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Such legends are, indeed, everywhere current amongst the vulgar; but the imagination is far more powerfully affected by them on the deep and dangerous seas of the north,—amidst precipices and headlands, many hundred feet in height,—amid perilous straits, and currents, and eddies,—long sunken reefs of rock, over which the vivid ocean foams and boils,—dark caverns, to whose extremities neither man nor skiff has ever ventured,—lonely, and often uninhabited isles,—and occasionally the ruins of ancient northern fastnesses, dimly seen by the feeble light of the Arctic winter. To Mordaunt, who had much of romance in his disposition, these superstitions formed a pleasing and interesting exercise of the imagination, while, half doubting, half inclined to believe, he listened to the tales chanted concerning these wonders of nature, and creatures of credulous belief, told in the rude but energetic language of the ancient Scalds.

But there wanted not softer and lighter amusement, that might seem better suited to Mordaunt's age, than the wild tales and rude exercises which we have already mentioned. The season of winter, when, from the shortness of the daylight, labour becomes impossible, is in Zetland the time of revel, feasting, and merriment. Whatever the fisherman has been able to acquire during summer, was expended, and often wasted, in maintaining the mirth and hospitality of his hearth during this period; while the landholders and gentlemen of the island gave double loose to their convivial and hospitable dispositions, thronged their houses with guests, and drove away the

lection of man. Part of the bones were sent to London, and pronounced by Sir Joseph Banks to be those of a basking shark; yet it would seem that an animal so well known ought to have been immediately distinguished by the northern fishermen.

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rigour of the season with jest, glee, and song, the dance, and the wine-cup.

Amid the revels of this merry, though rigorous season, no youth added more spirit to the dance, or glee to the revel, than the young stranger, Mordaunt Mertoun. When his father's state of mind permitted, or indeed required, his absence, he wandered from house to house a welcome guest wherever he came, and lent his willing voice to the song, and his foot to the revel. A boat, or, if the weather, as was often the case, permitted not that convenience, one of the numerous ponies, which, straying in hordes about the extensive moors, may be said to be at any man's command who can catch them, conveyed him from the mansion of one hospitable Zetlander to that of another. None excelled him in performing the warlike sword-dance, a species of amusement which had been derived from the habits of the ancient Norsemen. He could play upon the *gue*, and upon the common violin, the melancholy and pathetic tunes peculiar to the country; and with great spirit and execution could relieve their monotony with the livelier airs of the North of Scotland. When a party set forth as maskers, or, as they are called in Scotland, *guizards*, to visit some neighbouring Laird, or rich Udaller, it augured well of the expedition if Mordaunt Mertoun could be prevailed upon to undertake the office of *skudler*, or leader of the band. Upon these occasions, full of fun and frolic, he led his retinue from house to house, bringing mirth where he went, and leaving regret when he departed. Mordaunt became thus generally known, and beloved as generally, through most of the houses composing the patriarchal community of the Main Isle; but his visits were most frequently and most willingly paid at the mansion of his father's landlord and protector, Magnus Troil.

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It was not entirely the hearty and sincere welcome of the worthy old Magnate, nor the sense that he was in effect his father's patron, which occasioned these frequent visits. The hand of welcome was indeed received as eagerly as it was sincerely given, while the ancient Udaller, raising himself in his huge chair, whereof the inside was lined with well-dressed seal-skins, and the outside composed of massive oak, carved by the rude graving tool of some Hamburgh carpenter, shouted forth his welcome in a tone, which might, in ancient times, have hailed the return of *Ioul*, the highest festival of the Goths. There was metal yet more attractive, and younger hearts, whose welcome, if less loud, was as sincere as that of the jolly Udaller. But it is matter which ought not to be discussed at the conclusion of a chapter.

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CHAPTER III.

"Oh, Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,
They were twa bonnie lasses;
They bigged a house on yon burn-brae,
And theekit it ower wi' rashes.

"Fair Bessy Bell I looed yestreen,
And thought I ne'er could alter;
But Mary Gray's twa pawky een
Have garr'd my fancy falter."

Scots Song.

We have already mentioned Minna and Brenda, the daughters of Magnus Troil. Their mother had been dead for many years, and they were now two beautiful girls, the eldest only eighteen, which might be a year or two younger than Mordaunt Mertoun, the second about seventeen.—They were the joy of their father's heart, and the light of his old eyes; and although indulged to a degree which might have endangered his comfort and their own, they repaid his affection with a love, into which even blind indulgence had not introduced slight regard, or feminine caprice. The difference of their tempers and of their complexions was singularly striking, although combined, as is usual, with a certain degree of family resemblance.

The mother of these maidens had been a Scottish lady from the Highlands of Sutherland, the orphan of a noble chief, who, driven from his own country during the feuds

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of the seventeenth century, had found shelter in those peaceful islands, which, amidst poverty and seclusion, were thus far happy, that they remained unvexed by discord, and unstained by civil broil. The father (his name was Saint Clair) pined for his native glen, his feudal tower, his clansmen, and his fallen authority, and died not long after his arrival in Zetland. The beauty of his orphan daughter, despite her Scottish lineage, melted the stout heart of Magnus Troil. He sued and was listened to, and she became his bride; but dying in the fifth year of their union, left him to mourn his brief period of domestic happiness.

From her mother, Minna inherited the stately form and dark eyes, the raven locks and finely pencilled brows, which shewed she was, on one side at least, a stranger to the blood of Thule. Her cheek,—

"Oh call it fair, not pale!"

was so slightly and delicately tinged with the rose, that many thought the lily had an undue proportion in her complexion. But in that predominance of the paler flower, there was nothing sickly or languid; it was the true natural colour of health, and corresponded in a peculiar degree with features, which seemed calculated to express a contemplative and high-minded character. When Minna Troil heard a tale of wo or of injustice, it was then her blood rushed to her cheeks, and showed plainly how warm it beat, notwithstanding the generally serious, composed, and retiring disposition, which her countenance and demeanour seemed to exhibit. If strangers sometimes conceived that these fine features were clouded by melancholy, for which her age and situation could scarce have given occasion, they were soon satisfied, upon further

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acquaintance, that the placid, mild quietude of her disposition, and the mental energy of a character which was but little interested in ordinary and trivial occurrences, was the real cause of her gravity; and most men, when they knew that her melancholy had no ground in real sorrow, and was only the aspiration of a soul bent on more important objects than those by which she was surrounded; might have wished her whatever could add to her happiness, but could scarce have desired that, graceful as she was in her natural and unaffected seriousness, she should change that deportment for one more gay. In short, notwithstanding our wish to have avoided that hackneyed simile of an angel, we cannot avoid saying there was something in the serious beauty of her aspect, in the measured, yet graceful ease of her motions, in the music of her voice, and the serene purity of her eye, that seemed as if Minna Troil belonged naturally to some higher and better sphere, and was only the chance visitant of a world that was not worthy of her.

The scarcely less beautiful, equally lovely, and equally innocent Brenda, was of a complexion as differing from her sister, as they differed in character, taste, and expression. Her profuse locks were of that paly brown which receives from the passing sunbeam a tinge of gold, but darkens again when the ray has passed from it. Her eye, her mouth, the beautiful row of teeth, which in her innocent vivacity were frequently disclosed; the fresh, yet not too bright glow of a healthy complexion, tinging a skin like the drifted snow, spoke her genuine Scandinavian descent. A fairy form less tall than that of Minna, but still more finely moulded into symmetry—a careless and almost childish lightness of step—an eye that seemed to look on every object with pleasure, from a natural and

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serene cheerfulness of disposition, attracted even more general admiration than the charms of her sister, though perhaps that which Minna did excite, might be of a more intense as well as a more reverential character.

The dispositions of these lovely sisters were not less different than their complexions. In the kindly affections, neither could be said to excel the other, so much were they attached to their father and to each other. But the cheerfulness of Brenda mixed itself with the everyday business of life, and seemed inexhaustible in its profusion. The less buoyant spirit of her sister appeared to bring to society a contented wish to be interested and pleased with what was going forward, but was rather placidly carried along with the stream of mirth and pleasure, than disposed to aid its progress by any efforts of her own. She endured mirth rather than enjoyed it; and the pleasures in which she most delighted, were those of a graver and more solitary cast. The knowledge which is derived from books was beyond her reach. Zetland afforded few opportunities, in those days, of studying the lessons bequeathed

"By dead men to their kind;"

and Magnus Troil, such as we have described him, was not a person within whose mansion the means of such knowledge were to be acquired. But the book of nature was before Minna, that noblest of volumes, where we are ever called to wonder and to admire, even when we cannot understand. The plants of those wild regions, the shells on the shores, and the long list of feathered clans which haunt their cliffs and eyries, were as well known to Minna Troil as to the most experienced fowlers. Her powers of observation were wonderful, and little inter-

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rupted by other tones of feeling. The information which she acquired by habits of patient attention, was indelibly rivetted in a naturally powerful memory. She had also a high feeling for the solitary and melancholy grandeur of the scenes in which she was placed. The ocean, in all its varied forms of sublimity and terror—the tremendous cliffs that resound to the ceaseless roar of the billows, and the clang of the sea-fowl, had for Minna a charm in almost every state in which the changing seasons exhibited them. With the enthusiastic feelings proper to the romantic race from which her mother descended, the love of natural objects was to her a passion capable not only of occupying, but at times of agitating, her mind. Scenes upon which her sister looked with a sense of transient awe or emotion, which vanished on her return from witnessing them, continued long to fill Minna's imagination, not only in solitude, and in the silence of the night, but in the hours of society. So that sometimes when she sat like a beautiful statue, a present member of the domestic circle, her thoughts were far absent, wandering on the wild seashore, and among the yet wilder mountains of her native isles. And yet, when recalled to conversation, and mingling in it with interest, there were few to whom her friends were more indebted for enhancing its enjoyments; and although something in her manners claimed deference (notwithstanding her early youth) as well as affection, even her gay, lovely, and amiable sister was not more generally beloved than the more retired and pensive Minna.

Indeed, the two lovely sisters were not only the delight of their friends, but the pride of those islands, where the inhabitants of a certain rank were blended, by the remoteness of their situation and the general hospitality of their

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habits, into one friendly community. A wandering poet and parcel-musician, who, after going through various fortunes, had returned to end his days as he could in his native islands, had celebrated the daughters of Magnus in a poem, which he entitled Night and Day; and, in his description of Minna, might almost be thought to have anticipated, though only in a rude outline, the exquisite lines of Lord Byron,—

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

Their father loved the maidens both so well, that it might be difficult to say which he loved best; saving that, perchance, he liked his graver damsel better in the walk without doors, and his merry maiden better by the fireside; that he more desired the society of Minna when he was sad, and that of Brenda when he was mirthful; and, what was nearly the same thing, preferred Minna before noon, and Brenda after the glass had circulated in the evening.

But it was still more extraordinary, that the affections of Mordaunt Mertoun seemed to hover with the same impartiality as those of their father betwixt the two lovely sisters. From his boyhood, as we have noticed, he had been a frequent inmate of the residence of Magnus at Burgh-Westra, although it lay nearly twenty miles distant from Jarlshof. The impassable character of the country betwixt these places, extending over hills covered with loose and quaking bog, and frequently intersected by the creeks or arms of the sea, which indent the island on

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either side, as well as by fresh-water streams and lakes, rendered the journey difficult, and even dangerous, in the dark season; yet, as soon as the state of his father's mind warned him to absent himself, Mordaunt, at every risk, and under every difficulty, was pretty sure to be found the next day at Burgh-Westra, having achieved his journey in less time than would have been employed perhaps by the most active native.

He was of course set down as a wooer of one of the daughters of Magnus, by the public of Zetland; and when the old Udaller's great partiality to the youth was considered, nobody doubted that he might aspire to the hand of either of those distinguished beauties, with as large a share of islets, rocky moorland, and shore-fishings, as might be the fitting portion of a favoured child, and with the presumptive prospect of possessing half the domains of the ancient house of Troil, when their present owner should be no more. This seemed all a reasonable speculation, and, in theory at least, better constructed than many that are current through the world as unquestionable facts. But, alas! all that sharpness of observation which could be applied to the conduct of the parties, failed to determine the main point, to which of the young persons, namely, the attentions of Mordaunt were peculiarly devoted. He seemed, in general, to treat them as an affectionate and attached brother might have treated two sisters, so equally dear to him that a breath would have turned the scale of affection. Or if at any time, which often happened, the one maiden appeared the more especial object of his attention, it seemed only to be because circumstances called her peculiar talents and disposition into more particular and immediate exercise.

Both the sisters were accomplished in the simple music

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of the north, and Mordaunt, who was their assistant, and sometimes their preceptor, when they were practising this delightful art, might be now seen assisting Minna in the acquisition of those wild, solemn, and simple airs, to which scalds and harpers sung of old the deeds of heroes, and presently found equally active in teaching Brenda the more lively and complicated music, which their father's affection caused to be brought from the English or Scottish capital for the use of his daughters. And while conversing with them, Mordaunt, who mingled a strain of deep and ardent enthusiasm with the gay and ungovernable spirits of youth, was equally ready to enter into the wild and poetical visions of Minna, or into the lively and often humorous chat of her gayer sister. In short, so little did he seem to attach himself to either damsel exclusively, that he was sometimes heard to say, that Minna never looked so lovely, as when her light-hearted sister had induced her, for the time, to forget her habitual gravity; or Brenda so interesting, as when she sat listening, a subdued and affected partaker of the deep pathos of her sister Minna.

The public of the mainland were, therefore, to use the hunter's phrase, at fault in their farther conclusions, and could but determine, after long vacillating betwixt the maidens, that the young man was positively to marry one of them, but which of the two could only be determined when his approaching manhood, or the interference of stout old Magnus, the father, should teach Master Mordaunt Mertoun to know his own mind. "It was a pretty thing, indeed," they usually concluded, "that he, no native born, and possessed of no visible means of subsistence that is known to any one, should presume to hesitate, or affect to have the power of selection and choice, betwixt

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the two most distinguished beauties of Zetland. If they were Magnus Troil, they would soon be at the bottom of the matter"—and so forth. All which remarks were only whispered, for the hasty disposition of the Udaller had too much of the old Norse fire about it to render it safe for any one to become an unauthorized intermeddler with his family affairs; and thus stood the relation of Mordaunt Mertoun to the family of Mr. Troil of Burgh-Westra, when the following incidents took place.

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CHAPTER IV.

This is no pilgrim's morning—yon gray mist
Lies upon hill, and dale, and field, and forest,
Like the dun wimple of a new-made widow;
And, by my faith although my heart be soft,
I'd rather hear that widow weep and sigh,
And tell the virtues of the dear departed,
Than, when the tempest sends his voice abroad,
Be subject to its fury.

THE DOUBLE NUPTIALS.

THE spring was far advanced, when, after a week spent in sport and festivity at Burgh-Westra, Mordaunt Mertoun bade adieu to the family, pleading the necessity of his return to Jarlshof. The proposal was combated by the maidens, and more decidedly by Magnus himself. He saw no occasion whatever for Mordaunt returning to Jarlshof. If his father desired to see him, which, by the way, Magnus did not believe, Mr. Mertoun had only to throw himself into the stern of Sweyn's boat, or betake himself to a pony, if he liked a land journey better, and he would see not only his son, but twenty folk besides, who would be most happy to find that he had not lost the use of his tongue entirely during his long solitude; "although I must own," added the worthy Udaller, "that when he lived among us, nobody ever made less use of it."

Mordaunt acquiesced both in what respected his father's taciturnity, and his dislike to general society; but suggested, at the same time, that the first circumstance ren-

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dered his own immediate return more necessary, as he was the usual channel of communication betwixt his father and others; and that the second corroborated the same necessity, since Mr. Mertoun's having no other society whatever, seemed a weighty reason why his son's should be restored to him without loss of time. As to his father's coming to Burgh-Westra, "they might as well," he said, "expect to see Sumburgh Cape come thither."

"And that would be a cumbrous guest," said Magnus. "But you will stop for our dinner to-day? There are the families of Muness, Quendale, Thorslivoe, and I know not who else, are expected; and, besides the thirty that were in house this blessed night, we shall have as many more as chamber and bower, and barn and boat-house, can furnish with beds, or with barley-straw,—and you will leave all this behind you!"

"And the blithe dance at night," added Brenda, in a tone betwixt reproach and vexation; "and the young men from the Isle of Paba that are to dance the sword-dance, whom shall we find to match them, for the honour of the Main?"

"There is many a merry dancer on the main-land, Brenda," replied Mordaunt, "even if I should never rise on tiptoe again. And where good dancers are found, Brenda Troil will always find the best partner. I must trip it to-night through the Wastes of Dunrossness."

"Do not say so, Mordaunt," said Minna, who, during this conversation, had been looking from the window something anxiously; "go not, to-day at least, through the Wastes of Dunrossness."

"And why not to-day, Minna," said Mordaunt, laughing, "any more than to-morrow?"

"Oh, the morning mist lies heavy upon yonder chain

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of isles, nor has it permitted us since daybreak even a single glimpse of Fitful-head, the lofty cape that concludes yon splendid range of mountains. The fowl are winging their way to the shore, and the sheldrake seems, through the mist, as large as the scart.* See, the very sheer-waters and bonxies are making to the cliffs for shelter."

"And they will ride out a gale against a king's frigate," said her father; "there is foul weather when they cut and run."

"Stay, then, with us," said Minna, to her friend; "the storm will be dreadful, yet it will be grand to see it from Burgh-Westra, if we have no friend exposed to its fury. See, the air is close and sultry, though the season is yet so early, and the day so calm, that not a windlestraw moves on the heath. Stay with us, Mordaunt; the storm which these signs announce will be a dreadful one."

"I must be gone the sooner," was the conclusion of Mordaunt, who could not deny the signs, which had not escaped his own quick observation. "If the storm be too fierce, I will abide for the night at Stourburgh."

"What!" said Magnus; "will you leave us for the new chamberlain's new Scotch tacksman, who is to teach all us Zetland savages new ways? Take your own gate, my lad, if that is the song you sing."

"Nay," said Mordaunt; "I had only some curiosity to see the new implements he has brought."

"Ay, ay, ferlies make fools fain. I would like to know if his new plough will bear against a Zetland rock?" answered Magnus.

"I must not pass Stourburgh on the journey," said the

* The cormorant; which may be seen frequently dashing in wild flight along the roosts and tides of Zetland, and yet more often drawn up in ranks on some ledge of rock, like a body of the Black Brunswickers in 1815.

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youth, deferring to his patron's prejudice against innovation, "if this boding weather bring on tempest; but if it only break in rain, as is most probable, I am not likely to be melted in the wetting."

"It will not soften into rain alone," said Minna; "see how much heavier the clouds fall every moment, and see these weather-gaws that streak the lead-coloured mass with partial gleams of faded red and purple."

"I see them all," said Mordaunt; "but they only tell me I have no time to tarry here. Adieu, Minna; I will send you the eagle's feathers, if an eagle can be found on Fair-isle or Foulah. And fare-thee-well, my pretty Brenda, and keep a thought for me, should the Paba men dance ever so well."

"Take care of yourself, since go you will," said both sisters, together.

Old Magnus scolded them formally for supposing there was any danger to an active young fellow from a spring gale, whether by sea or land; yet ended by giving his own caution also to Mordaunt, advising him seriously to delay his journey, or at least to stop at Stourburgh. "For," said he, "second thoughts are best; and as the Scottish-man's howf lies right under your lee, why, take any port in a storm. But do not be assured to find the door on latch, let the storm blow ever so hard; there are such matters as bolts and bars in Scotland, though, thanks to Saint Ronald, they are unknown here, save that great lock on the old Castle of Scalloway, that all men run to see—may be they make part of this man's improvements. But go, Mordaunt, since go you will. You should drink a stirrup-cup now, were you three years older, but boys should never drink, excepting after dinner; I will drink it for you, that good customs may not be broken, or bad

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luck come of it. Here is your bonally, my lad." And so saying, he quaffed a rummer glass of brandy with as much impunity as if it had been spring-water. Thus regretted and cautioned on all hands, Mordaunt took leave of the hospitable household, and looking back at the comforts with which it was surrounded, and the dense smoke that rolled upwards from its chimneys, he first recollected the guestless and solitary desolation of Jarlshof, then compared with the sullen and moody melancholy of his father's temper the warm kindness of those whom he was leaving, and could not refrain from a sigh at the thoughts which forced themselves on his imagination.

The signs of the tempest did not dishonour the predictions of Minna. Mordaunt had not advanced three hours on his journey, before the wind, which had been so deadly still in the morning, began at first to wail and sigh, as if bemoaning beforehand the evils which it might perpetrate in its fury, like a madman in the gloomy state of dejection which precedes his fit of violence; then gradually increasing, the gale howled, raged, and roared, with the full fury of a northern storm. It was accompanied by showers of rain mixed with hail, that dashed with the most unrelenting rage against the hills and rocks with which the traveller was surrounded, distracting his attention, in spite of his utmost exertions, and rendering it very difficult for him to keep the direction of his journey in a country where there is neither road, nor even the slightest track to direct the steps of the wanderer, and where he is often interrupted by brooks as well as large pools of water, lakes, and lagoons. All these inland waters were now lashed into sheets of tumbling foam, much of which, carried off by the fury of the whirlwind, was mingled with the gale, and transported far from the waves of which it

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had lately made a part; while the salt relish of the drift which was pelted against his face, shewed Mordaunt that the spray of the more distant ocean, disturbed to frenzy by the storm, was mingled with that of the inland lakes and streams.

Amidst this hideous combustion of the elements, Mordaunt Mertoun struggled forward as one to whom such elemental war was familiar, and who regarded the exertions which it required to withstand its fury, but as a mark of resolution and manhood. He felt even, as happens usually to those who endure great hardships, that the exertion necessary to subdue them, is in itself a kind of elevating triumph. To see and distinguish his path when the cattle were driven from the hill, and the very fowls from the firmament, was but the stronger proof of his own superiority. "They shall not hear of me at Burgh-Westra," said he to himself, "as they heard of old doited Ringan Ewenson's boat, that foundered betwixt roadstead and key. I am more of a cragsman than to mind fire or water, wave by sea, or quagmire by land." Thus he struggled on, buffeting with the storm, supplying the want of the usual signs by which travellers directed their progress, (for rock, mountain, and headland, were shrouded in mist and darkness,) by the instinctive sagacity with which long acquaintance with these wilds had taught him to mark every minute object, which could serve in such circumstances to regulate his course. Thus, we repeat, he struggled onward, occasionally standing still, or even lying down, when the gust was most impetuous; making way against it when it was somewhat lulled, by a rapid and bold advance even in its very current; or, when this was impossible, by a movement resembling that of a vessel working to windward by short

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tacks, but never yielding one inch of the way which he had fought so hard to gain.

Yet, notwithstanding Mordaunt's experience and resolution, his situation was sufficiently uncomfortable, and even precarious; not because his sailor's jacket and trowsers, the common dress of young men through these isles when on a journey, were thoroughly wet, for that might have taken place within the same brief time, in any ordinary day, in this watery climate; but the real danger was, that, notwithstanding his utmost exertions, he made very slow way through brooks that were sending their waters all abroad; through morasses drowned in double deluges of moisture, which rendered all the ordinary passes more than usually dangerous, and repeatedly obliged the traveller to perform a considerable circuit, which in the usual case was unnecessary. Thus repeatedly baffled, notwithstanding his youth and strength, Mordaunt, after maintaining a dogged conflict with wind, rain, and the fatigue of a prolonged journey, was truly happy, when, not without having been more than once mistaken in his road, he at length found himself within sight of the house of Stourburgh, or Harfra; for the names were indifferently given to the residence of Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley, who was the chosen missionary of the Chamberlain of Orkney and Zetland, a speculative person, who designed, through the medium of Triptolemus, to introduce into the *Ultima Thule* of the Romans a spirit of improvement, which at that early period was scarce known to exist in Scotland itself.

At length, and with much difficulty, Mordaunt reached the house of this worthy agriculturist, the only refuge from the relentless storm which he could hope to meet with for several miles; and going straight to the door,

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with the most undoubting confidence of instant admission, he was not a little surprised to find it not merely latched, which the weather might excuse, but even bolted, a thing which, as Magnus Troil has already intimated, was almost unknown in the Archipelago. To knock, to call, and finally to batter the door with staff and stones, were the natural resources of the youth, who was rendered alike impatient by the pelting of the storm, and by encountering such most unexpected and unusual obstacles to instant admission. As he was suffered, however, for many minutes to exhaust his impatience in noise and clamour, without receiving any reply, we will employ them in informing the reader who Triptolemus Yellowley was, and how he came by a name so singular.

Old Jasper Yellowley, the father of Triptolemus, (though born at the foot of Roseberry-Topping,) had been *come over* by a certain noble Scottish Earl, who, proving too far north for canny Yorkshire, had persuaded him to accept of a farm in the Mearns, where, it is unnecessary to add, he found matters very different from what he had expected. It was in vain that the stout farmer set manfully to work, to counterbalance, by superior skill, the inconveniences arising from a cold soil and a weeping climate. These might have been probably overcome; but his neighbourhood to the Grampians exposed him eternally to that species of visitation from the plaided gentry who dwelt within their skirts, which made young Norval a warrior and a hero, but only converted Jasper Yellowley into a poor man. This was, indeed, balanced in some sort by the impression which his ruddy cheek and robust form had the fortune to make upon Miss Barbara Clinkscale, daughter to the umquhile, and sister to the then existing, Clinkscale of that ilk.

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This was thought a horrid and unnatural union in the neighbourhood, considering that the house of Clinkscale had at least as great a share of Scottish pride as of Scottish parsimony, and was amply endowed with both. But Miss Babie had her handsome fortune of two thousand marks at her own disposal, was a woman of spirit who had been *major* and *sui juris*, (as the writer who drew the contract assured her,) for full twenty years; so she set consequences and commentaries alike at defiance, and wedded the hearty Yorkshire yeoman. Her brother and her more wealthy kinsmen drew off in disgust, and almost disowned their degraded relative. But the house of Clinkscale was allied (like every other family in Scotland at the time) to a set of relations who were not so nice—tenth and sixteenth cousins, who not only acknowledged their kinswoman Babie after her marriage with Yellowley, but even condescended to eat beans and bacon (though the latter was then the abomination of the Scotch as much as of the Jews) with her husband, and would willingly have cemented the friendship by borrowing a little cash from him, had not his good lady (who understood trap as well as any woman in the Mearns) put a negative on this advance to intimacy. Indeed she knew how to make young Deilbelicket, old Dougald Baresword, the Laird of Bandybrawl, and others, pay for the hospitality which she did not think proper to deny them, by rendering them useful in her negotiations with the lighthanded lads beyond the Cairn, who, finding their late object of plunder was now allied to "kend folks, and owned by them at kirk and market," became satisfied, on a moderate yearly composition, to desist from their depredations.

This eminent success reconciled Jasper to the dominion which his wife began to assume over him; and which

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was much confirmed by her proving to be—let me see—what is the prettiest mode of expressing it?—in the family way. On this occasion, Mrs. Yellowley had a remarkable dream, as is the usual practice of teeming mothers previous to the birth of an illustrious offspring. She "was a-dreamed," as her husband expressed it, that she was safely delivered of a plough, drawn by three yoke of Angus-shire oxen; and being a mighty investigator into such portents, she sat herself down with her gossips, to consider what the thing might mean. Honest Jasper ventured, with much hesitation, to intimate his own opinion, that the vision had reference rather to things past than things future, and might have been occasioned by his wife's nerves having been a little startled by meeting in the loan above the house his own great plough with the six oxen, which were the pride of his heart. But the good *cummers* * raised such a hue and cry against this exposition, that Jasper was fain to put his fingers in his ears, and to run out of the apartment.

"Hear to him," said an old whigamore carline—"hear to him wi' his owsen, that are as an idol to him, even as the calf of Bethel! Na, na—its nae pleugh of the flesh that the bonny lad-bairn—for a lad it sall be—sall e'er striddle between the stilts o'—it's the pleugh of the spirit—and I trust mysell to see him wag the head o' him in a pu'pit; or, what's better, on a hill-side."

"Now the deil's in your whiggery," said the old lady Glenprosing; "wad ye hae our cummer's bonny lad-bairn wag the head aff his shouthers like your godly Mess James Guthrie, that ye hald such a clavering about?—Na, na, he sall walk a mair siccar path, and be a dainty

* *i. e.* Gossips.

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curate—and say he should live to be a bishop, what the waur wad he be?"

The gauntlet thus fairly flung down by one sibyl, was caught up by another, and the controversy between presbytery and episcopacy raged, roared, or rather screamed, a round of cinnamon water serving only like oil to the flame, till Jasper entered with the plough-staff; and by the awe of his presence, and the shame of misbehaving "before the stranger man," imposed some conditions of silence upon the disputants.

I do not know whether it was impatience to give to the light a being destined to such high and doubtful fates, or whether poor Dame Yellowley was rather frightened at the hurly-burly which had taken place in her presence, but she was taken suddenly ill; and, contrary to the formula in such cases used and provided, was soon reported to be "a good deal worse than was to be expected." She took the opportunity (having still all her wits about her) to extract from her sympathetic husband two promises; first, that he would christen the child, whose birth was like to cost her so dear, by a name indicative of the vision with which she had been favoured; and next, that he would educate him for the ministry. The canny Yorkshireman, thinking she had a good title at present to dictate in such matters, subscribed to all she required. A man-child was accordingly born under these conditions, but the state of the mother did not permit her for many days to inquire how far they had been complied with. When she was in some degree convalescent, she was informed, that as it was thought fit the child should be immediately christened, it had received the name of Triptolemus; the Curate, who was a man of some classical skill, conceiving that this epithet contained a hand-

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some and classical allusion to the visionary plough, with its triple yoke of oxen. Mrs. Yellowley was not much delighted with the manner in which her request had been complied with; but grumbling being to as little purpose as in the celebrated case of Tristram Shandy, she e'en sat down contented with the heathenish name, and endeavoured to counteract the effects it might produce upon the taste and feelings of the nominee, by such an education as might put him above the slightest thought of sacks, coulters, stilts, mouldboards, or any thing connected with the servile drudgery of the plough.

Jasper, sage Yorkshire man, smiled slyly in his sleeve, conceiving that young Trippie was likely to prove a chip of the old block, and would rather take after the jolly Yorkshire yeoman, than the gentle but somewhat *aigre* blood of the house of Clinkscale. He remarked, with suppressed glee, that the tune which best answered the purpose of a lullaby was the "Ploughman's Whistle," and the first words the infant learned to stammer were the names of the oxen; moreover, that the "bern" preferred home-brewed ale to Scotch twopenny, and never quitted hold of the tankard with so much reluctance as when there had been, by some manœuvre of Jasper's own device, a double straik of malt allowed to the brewing, above that which was sanctioned by the most liberal recipe of which his dame's household thrift admitted. Besides this, when no other means could be fallen upon to divert an occasional fit of squalling, his father observed that Trip could be always silenced by jingling a bridle at his ear. From all which symptoms he used to swear in private, that the boy would prove true Yorkshire, and mother and mother's kin would have small share of him.

Meanwhile, and within a year after the birth of Trip-

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tolemus, Mrs. Yellowley bore a daughter, named after herself Barbara, who, even in earliest infancy, exhibited the pinched nose and thin lips by which the Clinkscale family were distinguished amongst the inhabitants of the Mearns; and as her childhood advanced, the readiness with which she seized, and the tenacity wherewith she detained, the playthings of Triptolemus, besides a desire to bite, pinch, and scratch, on slight or no provocation, were all considered by attentive observers as proofs, that Miss Baby would prove "her mother over again." Malicious people did not stick to say, that the acrimony of the Clinkscale blood had not, on this occasion, been cooled and sweetened by that of Old England; that young Deilbelicket was much about the house, and they could not but think it odd, that Mrs. Yellowley, who, as the whole world knew, gave nothing for nothing, should be so uncommonly attentive to heap the trencher, and to fill the caup, of an idle blackguard ne'er-do-weel. But when folk had once looked upon the austere and awfully virtuous countenance of Mrs. Yellowley, they did full justice to her propriety of conduct, and Deilbelicket's delicacy of taste.

Meantime young Triptolemus, having received such instructions as the Curate could give him, (for though Dame Yellowley adhered to the persecuted remnant, her jolly husband, edified by the black gown and prayer-book, still conformed to the church as by law established,) was, in due process of time, sent to Saint Andrews to prosecute his studies. He went, it is true, but with an eye turned back with sad remembrances on his father's plough, his father's pancakes, and his father's ale, for which the small beer of the college, commonly there termed "thorough-go-nimble," furnished a poor substitute.

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Yet he advanced in his learning, being found, however, to shew a particular favour to such authors of antiquity as had made the improvement of the soil the object of their researches. He endured the Bucolics of Virgil—the Georgics he had by heart—but the Æneid he could not away with; and he was particularly severe upon the celebrated line expressing a charge of cavalry, because, as he understood the word *putrem*,* he opined that the combatants, in their inconsiderate ardour, galloped over a new-manured ploughed field. Cato, the Roman Censor, was his favourite among classical heroes and philosophers, not on account of the strictness of his morals, but because of his treatise, *de Re Rustica*. He had ever in his mouth the phrase of Cicero, *Jam neminem antepones Catoni*. He thought well of Palladius, and of Terentius Varro, but Columella was his pocket-companion. To these ancient worthies, he added the more modern Tusser, Hartlib, and other writers on rural economics, not forgetting the lucubrations of the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, and such of the better-informed Philomaths, who, instead of loading their almanacs with vain predictions of political events, pretended to see what seeds would grow and what would not, and direct the attention of their readers to that course of cultivation from which the production of good crops may be safely predicted; modest sages, in fine, who, careless of the rise and downfall of empires, content themselves with pointing out the fit seasons to reap and sow, with a fair guess at the weather which each month will be likely to present; as, for example, that if Heaven pleases, we shall have snow in January, and the author will stake his reputation that July proves, on the whole, a month of sunshine. Now, although the

* Quadrupedumque putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.

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Rector of Saint Leonard's was greatly pleased, in general, with the quiet, laborious, and studious bent of Triptolemus Yellowley, and deemed him, in so far, worthy of a name of four syllables, having a Latin termination, yet he relished not, by any means, his exclusive attention to his favourite authors. It savoured of the earth, he said, if not of something worse, to have a man's mind always grovelling in mould, stercorated or unstercorated; and he pointed out, but in vain, history, and poetry, and divinity, as more elevating subjects of occupation. Triptolemus Yellowley was obstinate in his own course. Of the battle of Pharsalia, he thought not, as it affected the freedom of the world, but dwelt on the rich crop which the Emathian fields were likely to produce the next season. In vernacular poetry, Triptolemus could scarce be prevailed upon to read a single couplet, excepting old Tusser, as aforesaid, whose Hundred Points of Good Husbandry he had got by heart; and excepting also Piers Ploughman's Vision, which, charmed with the title, he bought with avidity from a packman, but after reading the first two pages, flung it into the fire as an impudent and misnamed political libel. As to divinity, he summed that matter up by reminding his instructors, that to labour the earth and win his bread with the toil of his body and sweat of his brow, was the lot imposed upon fallen man; and, for his part, he was resolved to discharge, to the best of his abilities, a task so obviously necessary to existence, leaving others to speculate as much as they would, upon the more recondite mysteries of theology.

With a spirit so much narrowed and limited to the concerns of rural life, it may be doubted whether the proficiency of Triptolemus in learning, or the use he was like to make of his acquisitions, would have much gratified the

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ambitious hope of his affectionate mother. It is true, he expressed no reluctance to embrace the profession of a clergyman, which suited well enough with the habitual personal indolence which sometimes attaches to speculative dispositions. He had views, to speak plainly, (I wish they were peculiar to himself,) of cultivating the *glebe* six days in the week, preaching on the seventh with due regularity, and dining with some fat franklin or country laird, with whom he could smoke a pipe and drink a tankard after dinner, and mix in secret conference on the exhaustless subject,

Quid faciat lætas segetes.

Now, this plan, besides that it indicated nothing of what was then called the root of the matter, implied necessarily the possession of a manse; and the possession of a manse inferred compliance with the doctrines of prelacy, and other enormities of the time. There was some question how far manse and glebe, stipend, both victual and money, might have outbalanced the good lady's predisposition towards Presbytery; but her zeal was not put to so severe a trial. She died before her son had completed his studies, leaving her afflicted spouse just as disconsolate as was to be expected. The first act of old Jasper's undivided administration was to recall his son from Saint Andrews, in order to obtain his assistance in his domestic labours. And here it might have been supposed that our Triptolemus, summoned to carry into practice what he had so fondly studied in theory, must have been, to use a simile which *he* would have thought lively, like a cow entering upon a clover park. Alas, mistaken thoughts, and deceitful hopes of mankind!

A laughing philosopher, the Democritus of our day, once, in a moral lecture, compared human life to a table

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pierced with a number of holes, each of which has a pin made exactly to fit it, but which pins being stuck in hastily, and without selection, chance leads inevitably to the most awkward mistakes. "For, how often do we see," the orator pathetically concluded,—"how often, I say, do we see the round man stuck into the three-cornered hole!" This new illustration of the vagaries of fortune set every one present into convulsions of laughter, excepting one fat alderman, who seemed to make the case his own, and insisted that it was no jesting matter. To take up the simile, however, which is an excellent one, it is plain that Triptolemus Yellowley had been shaken out of the bag at least a hundred years too soon. If he had come on the stage in our own time, that is, if he had flourished at any time within these thirty or forty years, he could not have missed to have held the office of vice-president of some eminent agricultural society, and to have transacted all the business thereof under the auspices of some noble duke or lord, who, as the matter might happen, either knew, or did not know, the difference betwixt a horse and a cart, and a cart-horse. He could not have missed such preferment, for he was exceedingly learned in all those particulars, which, being of no consequence in actual practice, go, of course, a great way to constitute the character of a connoisseur in any art, but especially in agriculture. But, alas! Triptolemus Yellowley had, as we already have hinted, come into the world at least a century too soon; for, instead of sitting in an arm-chair, with a hammer in his hand, and a bumper of port before him, giving forth the toast,—"To breeding, in all its branches," his father planted him betwixt the stilts of a plough, and invited him to guide the oxen, on whose beauties he would, in our day, have descanted, and whose rumps he would

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not have goaded, but have carved. Old Jasper complained, that although no one talked so well of common and several, wheat and rape, fallow and lea, as his learned son, (whom he always called Tolimus,) yet, "dang it," added the Seneca, "nought thrives wi' un—nought thrives wi' un!" It was still worse, when Jasper, becoming frail and ancient, was obliged, as happened in the course of a few years, gradually to yield up the reins of government to the academical neophyte.

As if Nature had meant him a spite, he had got one of the *dourest* and most intractable farms in the Mearns, to try conclusions withal, a place which seemed to yield every thing but what the agriculturist wanted; for there were plenty of thistles, which indicates dry land; and store of fern, which is said to intimate deep land; and nettles, which show where lime hath been applied; and deep furrows in the most unlikely spots, which intimated that it had been cultivated in former days by the Peghts, as popular tradition bore. There was also enough of stones to keep the ground warm, according to the creed of some farmers, and great abundance of springs to render it cool and sappy, according to the theory of others. It was in vain that, acting alternately on these opinions, poor Triptolemus endeavoured to avail himself of the supposed capabilities of the soil. No kind of butter that might be churned could be made to stick upon his own bread, any more than on that of poor Tusser, whose Hundred Points of Good Husbandry, so useful to others of his day, were never to himself worth as many pennies.*

* This is admitted by the English agriculturist:—

"My music since has been the plough,
Entangled with some care among;
The gain not great, the pain enough,
Hath made me sing another song."

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In fact, excepting an hundred acres of infield, to which old Jasper had early seen the necessity of limiting his labours, there was not a corner of the farm fit for any thing but to break plough-graith, and kill cattle. And then, as for the part which was really tilled with some profit, the expense of the farming establishment of Triptolemus, and his disposition to experiment, soon got rid of any good arising from the cultivation of it. "The carles and the cart-avers," he confessed with a sigh, speaking of his farm-servants and horses, "make it all, and the carles and cart-avers eat it all;" a conclusion which might sum up the year-book of many a gentleman-farmer.

Matters would have soon been brought to a close with Triptolemus in the present day. He would have got a bank-credit, manœuvred with wind-bills, dashed out upon a large scale, and soon have seen his crop and stock sequestered by the Sheriff; but in those days a man could not ruin himself so easily. The whole Scottish tenantry stood upon the same level flat of poverty, so that it was extremely difficult to find any vantage ground, by climbing up to which a man might have an opportunity of actually breaking his neck with some eclat. They were pretty much in the situation of people, who, being totally without credit, may indeed suffer from indigence, but cannot possibly become bankrupt. Besides, notwithstanding the failure of Triptolemus's projects, there was to be balanced against the expenditure which they occasioned, all the savings which the extreme economy of his sister Barbara could effect; and in truth her exertions were wonderful. She might have realized, if any one could, the idea of the learned philosopher, who pronounced that sleeping was a fancy, and eating but a habit,

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and who appeared to the world to have renounced both, until it was unhappily discovered that he had an intrigue with the cook-maid of the family, who indemnified him for his privations by giving him private entrée to the pantry, and to a share of her own couch. But no such deceptions were practised by Barbara Yellowley. She was up early and down late, and seemed, to her over-watched and over-tasked maidens, to be as *wakerife* as the cat herself. Then, for eating, it appeared that the air was a banquet to her, and she would fain have made it so to her retinue. Her brother, who, besides being lazy in his person, was somewhat luxurious in his appetite, would willingly now and then have tasted a mouthful of animal food, were it but to know how his sheep were fed off; but a proposal to eat a child could not have startled Mistress Barbara more; and, being of a compliant and easy disposition, Triptolemus reconciled himself to the necessity of a perpetual Lent, too happy when he could get a scrap of butter to his oaten cake, or (as they lived on the banks of the Esk) escape the daily necessity of eating salmon, whether in or out of season, six days out of the seven.

But although Mrs. Barbara brought faithfully to the joint-stock all savings which her awful powers of economy accomplished to scrape together, and although the dower of their mother was by degrees expended, or nearly so, in aiding them upon extreme occasions, the term at length approached when it seemed impossible that they could sustain the conflict any longer against the evil star of Triptolemus, as he called it himself, or the natural result of his absurd speculations, as it was termed by others. Luckily at this sad crisis, a god jumped down to their relief out of a machine. In plain English, the noble lord, who owned their farm, arrived at his mansion-

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house in their neighbourhood, with his coach and six and his running footmen, in the full splendour of the seventeenth century.

This person of quality was the son of the nobleman who had brought the ancient Jasper into the country from Yorkshire, and he was, like his father, a fanciful and scheming man.* He had schemed well for himself, however, amid the mutations of the time, having obtained, for a certain period of years, the administration of the remote islands of Orkney and Zetland, for payment of a certain rent, with the right of making the most of whatever was the property or revenue of the crown in these districts, under the title of Lord Chamberlain. Now, his lordship had become possessed with a notion, in itself a very true one, that much might be done to render this grant available, by improving the culture of the crown-lands, both in Orkney and Zetland; and then, having some acquaintance with our friend Triptolemus, he thought (rather less happily) that he might prove a person capable of furthering his schemes. He sent for him to the great Hall-house, and was so much edified by the way in which our friend laid down the law upon every given subject relating to rural economy, that he lost no time in securing the co-operation of so valuable an assistant, the first step being to release him from his present unprofitable farm.

The terms were arranged much to the mind of Triptolemus, who had already been taught, by many years' experience, a dark sort of notion, that, without underval

* At the period supposed, the Earl of Morton held the Islands of Orkney and Zetland, originally granted in 1643, confirmed in 1707, and rendered absolute in 1742. This gave the family much property and influence, which they usually exercised by factors, named chamberlains. In 1766 this property was sold by the then Earl of Morton to Sir Lawrence Dundas, by whose son, Lord Dundas, it is now held.

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ning or doubting for a moment his own skill, it would be quite as well that almost all the trouble and risk should be at the expense of his employer. Indeed, the hopes of advantage which he held out to his patron were so considerable, that the Lord Chamberlain dropped every idea of admitting his dependent into any share of the expected profits; for, rude as the arts of agriculture were in Scotland, they were far superior to those known and practised in the regions of Thule, and Triptolemus Yellowley conceived himself to be possessed of a degree of insight into these mysteries, far superior to what was possessed or practised even in the Mearns. The improvement, therefore, which was to be expected, would bear a double proportion, and the Lord Chamberlain was to reap all the profit, deducting a handsome salary for his steward Yellowley, together with the accommodation of a house and domestic farm for the support of his family. Joy seized the heart of Mistress Barbara, at hearing this happy termination of what threatened to be so very bad an affair as their lease of Cauldacres.

"If we cannot," she said, "provide for our own house, when all is coming in, and nothing going out, surely we must be worse than infidels!"

Triptolemus was a busy man for some time, huffing and puffing, and eating and drinking in every change-house, while he ordered and collected together proper implements of agriculture, to be used by the natives of these devoted islands, whose destinies were menaced with this formidable change. Singular tools these would seem, if presented before a modern agricultural society; but every thing is relative, nor could the heavy cartload of timber, called the old Scots plough, seem less strange to a Scottish farmer of this present day, than the corselets

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and casques of the soldiers of Cortes might seem to a regiment of our own army. Yet the latter conquered Mexico, and undoubtedly the former would have been a splendid improvement on the state of agriculture in Thule.

We have never been able to learn why Triptolemus preferred fixing his residence in Zetland, to becoming an inhabitant of the Orkneys. Perhaps he thought the inhabitants of the latter Archipelago the more simple and docile of the two kindred tribes; or perhaps he preferred the situation of the house and farm he himself was to occupy, (which was indeed a tolerable one,) as preferable to that which he had it in his power to have obtained upon Pomona, (so the main island of the Orkneys is entitled.) At Harfra, or, as it was sometimes called, Stourburgh, from the remains of a Pictish fort, which was almost close to the mansion-house, the factor settled himself, in the plenitude of his authority; determined to honour the name he bore by his exertions, in precept and example, to civilize the Zetlanders, and improve their very confined knowledge in the primary arts of human life.

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CHAPTER V.

The wind blew keen frae north and east;
It blew upon the floor,
Quo' our goodman to our goodwife,
"Get up and bar the door."

"My hand is in my housewife-skep,
Goodman, as ye may see;
If it shouldna be barr'd this hundred years,
It's no be barr'd for me!"

OLD SONG.

WE can only hope that the gentle reader has not found the latter part of the last chapter extremely tedious; but, at any rate, his impatience will scarce equal that of young Mordaunt Mertoun, who, while the lightning came flash after flash, while the wind, veering and shifting from point to point, blew with all the fury of a hurricane, and while the rain was dashed against him in deluges, stood hammering, calling, and roaring at the door of the old Place at Harfra impatient for admittance, and at a loss to conceive any position of existing circumstances, which could occasion the exclusion of a stranger, especially during such horrible weather. At length, finding his noise and vociferation were equally in vain, he fell back so far from the front of the house, as was necessary to enable him to reconnoitre the chimneys; and amidst "storm and shade," could discover, to the increase of his dismay, that though noon, then the dinner hour of these islands, was

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now nearly arrived, there was no smoke proceeding from the tunnels of the vents to give any note of preparation within.

Mordaunt's wrathful impatience was now changed into sympathy and alarm; for, so long accustomed to the exuberant hospitality of the Zetland islands, he was immediately induced to suppose some strange and unaccountable disaster had befallen the family; and forthwith set himself to discover some place at which he could make forcible entry, in order to ascertain the situation of the inmates, as much as to obtain shelter from the still increasing storm. His present anxiety, was, however, as much thrown away as his late clamorous importunities for admittance had been. Triptolemus and his sister had heard the whole alarm without, and had already had a sharp dispute on the propriety of opening the door.

Mrs. Baby, as we have described her, was no willing renderer of the rites of hospitality. In their farm of Cauldacres, in the Mearns, she had been the dread and abhorrence of all gaberlunzie men, and travelling packmen, gipsies, long remembered beggars, and so forth; nor was there one of them so wily, as she used to boast, as could ever say they had heard the clink of her sneck. In Zetland, where the new settlers were yet strangers to the extreme honesty and simplicity of all classes, suspicion and fear joined with frugality in her desire to exclude all wandering guests of uncertain character; and the second of these motives had its effect on Triptolemus himself, who, though neither suspicious nor penurious, knew good people were scarce, good farmers scarcer, and had a reasonable share of that wisdom which looks towards self-preservation as the first law of nature. These hints may serve as a commentary on the follow-

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ing dialogue which took place betwixt the brother and sister.

"Now, good be gracious to us," said Triptolemus, as he sat thumbing his old school-copy of Virgil, "here is a pure day for the bear seed!—Well spoke the wise Mantuan—*ventis surgentibus*—and then the groans of the mountains, and the long-resounding shores—but where's the woods, Baby? tell me, I say, where we shall find the *nemorum murmur*, sister Baby, in these new seats of ours?"

"What's your foolish will?" said Baby, popping her head from out of a dark recess in the kitchen, where she was busy about some nameless deed of housewifery.

Her brother, who had addressed himself to her more from habit than intention, no sooner saw her bleak red nose, keen gray eyes, with the sharp features thereunto conforming, shaded by the flaps of the loose *toy* which depended on each side of her eager face, than he bethought himself that his query was likely to find little acceptation from her, and therefore stood another volley before he would resume the topic.

"I say, Mr. Yellowley," said sister Baby, coming into the middle of the room, "what for are ye crying on me, and me in the midst of my housewife-skep?"

"Nay, for nothing at all, Baby," answered Triptolemus, "saving that I was saying to myself, that here we had the sea, and the wind, and the rain, sufficient enough, but where's the wood? where's the wood, Baby, answer me that?"

"The wood?" answered Baby—"Were I no to take better care of the wood than you, brother, there would soon be no more wood about the town than the barber's block that's on your own shoulders, Triptolemus. If ye

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be thinking of the wreck-wood that the callants brought in yesterday, there was six ounces of it gaed to boil your parritch this morning; though, I trow, a carefu' man wad have ta'en drammock, if breakfast he behoved to have, rather than waste baith meltith and fuel in the same morning."

"That is to say, Baby," replied Triptolemus, who was somewhat of a dry joker in his way, "that when we have fire we are not to have food, and when we have food we are not to have fire, these being too great blessings to enjoy both in the same day. Good luck, you do not propose we should starve with cold and starve with hunger, *unico contextu*. But to tell you the truth, I could never away with raw oatmeal, slockened with water, in all my life. Call it drammock, or crowdie, or just what ye list, my vivers must thole fire and water."

"The mair gowk you," said Baby; "can ye not make your brose on the Sunday, and sup them cauld on the Monday, since ye're sae dainty? Mony is the fairer face than yours that has licked the lip after such a cogfu'."

"Mercy on us, sister!" said Triptolemus; "at this rate, it's a finished field with me—I must unyoke the pleugh, and lie down to wait for the deadthraw. Here is that in this house wad hold all Zetland in meal for a twelvemonth, and ye grudge a cogfu' of warm parritch to me, that has sic a charge!"

"Whisht—hold your silly clavering tongue," said Baby, looking round with apprehension—"ye are a wise man to speak of what is in the house, and a fitting man to have the charge of it.—Hark, as I live by bread, I hear a tapping at the outer yett!"

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"Go and open it then, Baby," said her brother, glad at any thing that promised to interrupt the dispute.

"Go and open it, said he!" echoed Baby, half angry, half frightened, and half triumphant at the superiority of her understanding over that of her brother—"Go and open it, said you, indeed!—is it to lend robbers a chance to take all that is in the house?"

"Robbers!" echoed Triptolemus, in his turn; "there are no more robbers in this country than there are lambs at Yule. I tell you, as I have told you an hundred times, there are no Highlandmen to harry us here. This is a land of quiet and honesty. *O fortunati nimium!*"

"And what good is Saint Rinian to do ye, Tolemus?" said his sister, mistaking the quotation for a Catholic invocation. "Besides, if there be no Highlandmen, there may be as bad. I saw sax or seven as ill-looking chields gang past the Place yesterday, as ever came frae beyont Clochna-ben; ill-fa'red tools they had in their hands, whaaling knives they ca'ed them, but they looked as like dirks and whingers as ae bit airn can look like anither. There is nae honest men carry siccan tools."

Here the knocking and shouts of Mordaunt were very audible betwixt every swell of the horrible blast which was careering without. The brother and sister looked at each other in real perplexity and fear. "If they have heard of the siller," said Baby, her very nose changing with terror from red to blue, "we are but gane folk!"

"Who speaks now, when they should hold their tongue?" said Triptolemus. "Go to the shot-window instantly, and see how many there are of them, while I load the old Spanish-barrelled duck-gun—go as if you were stepping on new-laid-eggs."

Baby crept to the window, and reported that she saw

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only "one young chield, clattering and roaring as gin he were daft. How many there might be out of sight, she could not say."

"Out of sight!—nonsense," said Triptolemus, laying aside the ramrod with which he was loading the piece, with a trembling hand. "I will warrant them out of sight and hearing both—this is some poor fellow catched in the tempest, wants the shelter of our roof, and a little refreshment. Open the door, Baby, it's a Christian deed."

"But is it a Christian deed of him to come in at the window, then?" said Baby, setting up a most doleful shriek, as Mordaunt Mertoun, who had forced open one of the windows, leaped down into the apartment, dripping with water like a river god. Triptolemus, in great tribulation, presented the gun which he had not yet loaded, while the intruder exclaimed, "Hold, hold—what the devil mean you by keeping your doors bolted in weather like this, and levelling your gun at folk's heads as you would at a sealgh's?"

"And who are you, friend, and what want you?" said Triptolemus, lowering the butt of his gun to the floor as he spoke, and so recovering his arms.

"What do I want!" said Mordaunt; "I want every thing—I want meat, drink, and fire, a bed for the night, and a sheltie for to-morrow morning to carry me to Jarlshof."

"And ye said there were nae caterans or sorners here?" said Baby to the agriculturist, reproachfully. "Heard ye ever a breekless loon frae Lochaber tell his mind and his errand mair deftly?—Come, come, friend," she added, addressing herself to Mordaunt, "put up your pipes and gang your gate; this is the house of his Lordship's factor, and no place of reset for thiggers or sorners."

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Mordaunt laughed in her face at the simplicity of the request. "Leave built walls," he said, "and in such a tempest as this? What take you me for?—a gannet or a scart do you think I am, that your clapping your hands and skirling at me like a madwoman, should drive me from the shelter into the storm?"

"And so you propose, young man," said Triptolemus, gravely, "to stay in my house, *volens nolens*—that is, whether we will or no?"

"Will!" said Mordaunt; "what right have you to will any thing about it? Do you not hear the thunder? Do you not hear the rain? Do you not see the lightning? And do you not know this is the only house within I wot not how many miles? Come, my good master and dame, this may be Scottish jesting, but it sounds strange in Zetland ears. You have let out the fire, too, and my teeth are dancing a jig in my head with cold; but I'll soon put that to rights."

He seized the fire-tongs, raked together the embers upon the hearth, broke up into life the gathering-peat, which the hostess had calculated should have preserved the seeds of fire, without giving them forth, for many hours; then casting his eye round, saw in a corner the stock of drift-wood, which Mrs. Baby had served forth by ounces, and transferred two or three logs of it at once to the hearth, which, conscious of such unwonted supply, began to transmit to the chimney such a smoke as had not issued from the Place of Harfra for many a day.

While their uninvited guest was thus making himself at home, Baby kept edging and jogging the factor to turn out the intruder. But for this undertaking, Triptolemus Yellowley felt neither courage nor zeal, nor did circumstances seem at all to warrant the favourable conclusion

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of any fray into which he might enter with the young stranger. The sinewy limbs and graceful form of Mordaunt Mertoun were seen to great advantage in his simple sea-dress; and with his dark sparkling eye, finely formed head, animated features, close curled dark hair, and bold free looks, the stranger formed a very strong contrast with the host on whom he had intruded himself. Triptolemus was a short, clumsy, duck-legged disciple of Ceres, whose bottle-nose, turned up and handsomely coppered at the extremity, seemed to intimate something of an occasional treaty with Bacchus. It was like to be no equal mellay betwixt persons of such unequal form and strength; and the difference betwixt twenty and fifty years was nothing in favour of the weaker party. Besides, the factor was an honest good-natured fellow at bottom, and being soon satisfied that his guest had no other views than those of obtaining refuge from the storm, it would, despite his sister's instigations, have been his last act to deny a boon so reasonable and necessary to a youth whose exterior was so prepossessing. He stood, therefore, considering how he could most gracefully glide into the character of the hospitable landlord, out of that of the churlish defender of his domestic castle, against an unauthorized intrusion, when Baby, who had stood appalled at the extreme familiarity of the stranger's address and demeanour, now spoke up for herself.

"My troth, lad," said she to Mordaunt, "ye are no blate, to light on at that rate, and the best of wood, too—nane of your sharney peats, but good aik timber, nae less maun serve ye!"

"You come lightly by it, dame," said Mordaunt, carelessly; "and you should not grudge the fire what the sea gives you for nothing. These good ribs of oak did their

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last duty upon earth and ocean, when they could hold no longer together under the brave hearts that manned the bark."

"And that's true, too," said the old woman, softening—"this maun be awsome weather by sea. Sit down and warm ye, since the sticks are a-low."

"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, "it is a pleasure to see siccan a bonny bleeze. I havena seen the like o't since I left Cauldacres."

"And shallna see the like o't again in a hurry," said Baby, "unless the house take fire, or there suld be a coal-heugh found out."

"And wherefore should not there be a coal-heugh found out?" said the factor triumphantly—"I say, wherefore should not a coal-heugh be found out in Zetland as well as in Fife, now that the Chamberlain has a far-sighted and discreet man upon the spot to make the necessary perquisitions? They are baith fishing stations, I trow?"

"I tell you what it is, Tolemus Yellowley," answered his sister, who had practical reasons to fear her brother's opening upon any false scent, "if you promise my Lord sae mony of these bonnie-wallies, we'll no be weel hafted here before we are found out and set a-trotting again. If ane was to speak to ye about a gold mine, I ken weel wha wad promise he suld have Portugal pieces clinking in his pouch before the year gaed by."

"And why suld I not?" said Triptolemus—"may be your head does not know there is a land in Orkney called Ophir, or something very like it; and wherefore might not Solomon, the wise King of the Jews, have sent thither his ships and his servants for four hundred and fifty talents? I trow, he knew best where to go or send, and I hope you believe in your Bible, Baby?"

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Baby was silenced by an appeal to Scripture, however *mal à propos*, and only answered by an inarticulate *humph* of incredulity or scorn, while her brother went on addressing Mordaunt—"Yes, you shall all of you see what a change shall coin introduce, even into such an unpropitious country as yours. Ye have not heard of copper, I warrant, or of iron-stone, in these islands, neither?" Mordaunt said he had heard there was copper near the Cliffs of Konigsburgh. "Ay, and a copper scum is found on the Loch of Swana, too, young man. But the youngest of you, doubtless, thinks himself a match for such as I am."

Baby, who during all this while had been closely and accurately reconnoitring the youth's person, now interposed in a manner by her brother totally unexpected. "Ye had mair need, Mr. Yellowley, to give the young man some dry clothes, and to see about getting something for him to eat, than to sit there bleezing away with your lang tales, as if the weather were not windy enow without your help; and may be the lad would drink some *bland*, or siclike, if ye had the grace to ask him."

While Triptolemus looked astonished at such a proposal, considering the quarter it came from, Mordaunt answered, he "should be very glad to have dry clothes, but begged to be excused from drinking until he had eaten somewhat."

Triptolemus accordingly conducted him into another apartment, and accommodating him with a change of dress, left him to his arrangements, while he himself returned to the kitchen, much puzzled to account for his sister's unusual fit of hospitality. "She must be *fey*," * he said,

* When a person changes his condition suddenly, as when a miser becomes liberal, or a churl good-humoured, he is said, in Scotch, to be

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"and in that case has not long to live, and though I fall heir to her tocher-good, I am, sorry for it; for she has held the house-gear well together—drawn the girth over tight it may be now and then, but the saddle sits the better."

When Triptolemus returned to the kitchen, he found his suspicions confirmed; for his sister was in the desperate act of consigning to the pot a smoked goose, which, with others of the same tribe, had long hung in the large chimney, muttering to herself at the same time,—"It maun be eaten sune or syne, and what for no by the puir callant?"

"What is this of it, sister?" said Triptolemus. "You have on the girdle and the pot at ance. What day is this wi' you?"

"E'en such a day as the Israelites had beside the flesh-pots of Egypt, billie Triptolemus: but ye little ken wha ye have in your house this blessed day."

"Troth, and little do I ken," said Triptolemus, "as little as I would ken the naig I never saw before. I would take the lad for a yagger,* but he has rather ower good havings, and he has no pack."

"Ye ken as little as ane of your ain bits of nowt, man," retorted sister Baby; "if ye ken na him, do ye ken Tronda Dronsdaughter?"

"Tronda Dronsdaughter!" echoed Triptolemus—"how should I but ken her, when I pay her twal pennies Scots by the day, for working in the house here? I trow she works as if the things burned her fingers. I had better give a Scots lass a groat of English siller."

fey; that is, pre-destined to speedy death, of which such mutations of humour are received as a sure indication.

* A pedlar.

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"And that's the maist sensible word ye have said this blessed morning.—Weel, but Tronda kens this lad weel, and she has often spoke to me about him. They call his father the Silent Man of Sumburgh, and they say he's uncanny."

"Hout, hout—nonsense, nonsense—they are aye at sic trash as that," said the brother, "when you want a day's wark out of them—they have stepped ower the tangs, or they have met an uncanny body, or they have turned about the boat against the sun, and then there's nought to be done that day."

"Weel, weel, brother, ye are so wise," said Baby, because ye knapped Latin at Saint Andrews; and can your lair tell me, then, what the lad has round his halse?"

"A Barcelona napkin, as wet as a dishclout, and I have just lent him one of my own overlays," says Triptolemus.

"A Barcelona napkin!" said Baby, elevating her voice, and then suddenly lowering it, as from apprehension of being overheard—"I say a gold chain!"

"A gold chain!" said Triptolemus.

"In troth is it, hinny; and how like you that? The folk say here, as Tronda tells me, that the King of the Drows gave it to his father, the Silent Man of Sumburgh."

"I wish you would speak sense, or be the silent woman," said Triptolemus. "The upshot of it all is, then, that this lad is the rich stranger's son, and that you are giving him the goose you were to keep till Michaelmas?"

"Troth, brother, we maun do something for God's sake, and to make friends; and the lad," added Baby, (for even she was not altogether above the prejudices of her sex in favour of outward form,) "the lad has a fair face of his ain."

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"Ye would have let mony a fair face," said Triptolemus, "pass the door pining, if it had not been for the gold chain."

"Nae doubt, nae doubt," replied Barbara; "ye wad not have me waste our substance on every thigger or sorner that has the luck to come by the door in a wet day? But this lad has a fair and a wide name in the country, and Tronda says he is to be married to a daughter of the rich Udaller, Magnus Troil, and the marriage-day is to be fixed whenever he makes choice (set him up!) between the twa lasses; and so it wad be as much as our good name is worth, and our quiet forby, to let him sit unserved, although he does come unsent for."

"The best reason in life," said Triptolemus, "for letting a man into a house is, that you dare not bid him go by. However, since there is a man of quality amongst them, I will let him know whom he has to do with, in my person." Then, advancing to the door, he exclaimed, "*Heus tibi, Dave!*"

"*Adsum,*" answered the youth, entering the apartment.

"Hem!" said the erudite Triptolemus, "not altogether deficient in his humanities, I see. I will try him farther. —Canst thou aught of husbandry, young gentleman?"

"Troth, sir, not I," answered Mordaunt; "I have been trained to plough upon the sea, and to reap upon the crag."

"Plough the sea!" said Triptolemus; "that's a furrow requires small harrowing; and for your harvest on the crag, I suppose you mean these *scowries*, or whatever you call them. It is a sort of ingathering which the Ranzelman should stop by the law; nothing more likely to break an honest man's bones. I profess I cannot see the pleasure men propose by dangling in a rope's-end betwixt

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earth and heaven. In my case, I had as lief the other end of the rope were fastened to the gibbet; I should be sure of not falling, at least."

"Now, I would only advise you to try it," replied Mordaunt. "Trust me, the world has few grander sensations than when one is perched in mid-air between a high-browed cliff and a roaring ocean, the rope by which you are sustained seeming scarce stronger than a silken thread, and the stone on which you have one foot steadied, affording such a breadth as the kittywake might rest upon—to feel and know all this, with the full confidence that your own agility of limb, and strength of head, can bring you as safe off as if you had the wing of the gosshawk—this is indeed being almost independent of the earth you tread on!"

Triptolemus stared at this enthusiastic description of an amusement which had so few charms for him; and his sister, looking at the glancing eye and elevated bearing of the young adventurer, answered, by ejaculating, "My certie, lad, but ye are a brave chield!"

"A brave chield?" returned Yellowley,—"I say a brave goose, to be flichtering and fleeing in the wind when he might abide upon *terra firma;* but come, here's a goose that is more to the purpose, when once it is well boiled. Get us trenchers and salt, Baby—but in truth it will prove salt enough—a tasty morsel it is; but I think the Zetlanders be the only folk in the world that think of running such risks to catch geese, and then boiling them when they have done."

"To be sure," replied his sister, (it was the only word they had agreed in that day,) "it would be an unco thing to bid ony gudewife in Angus or a' the Mearns boil a goose, while there was sic things as spits in the warld.—

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But wha's this neist?" she added, looking towards the entrance with great indignation. "My certie, open doors, and dogs come in—and wha opened the door to him?"

"I did, to be sure," replied Mordaunt; "you would not have a poor devil stand beating your deaf door-cheeks in weather like this?—Here goes something, though, to help the fire," he added, drawing out the sliding bar of oak with which the door had been secured, and throwing it on the hearth, whence it was snatched by Dame Baby in great wrath, she exclaiming at the same time,—"It's seaborne timber, as there's little else here, and he dings it about as if it were a fir-clog!—And who be you, an it please you?" she added, turning to the stranger,—"a very hallanshaker loon, as ever crossed my twa een!"

"I am a jagger, if it like your ladyship," replied the uninvited guest, a stout, vulgar little man, who had indeed the humble appearance of a pedlar, called *jagger* in these islands—"never travelled in a waur day, or was more willing to get to harbourage,—Heaven be praised for fire and house-room!"

So saying, he drew a stool to the fire, and sat down without farther ceremony. Dame Baby stared "wild as gray gosshawk," and was meditating how to express her indignation in something warmer than words, for which the boiling pot seemed to offer a convenient hint, when an old half-starved serving-woman—the Tronda already mentioned—the sharer of Barbara's domestic cares, who had been as yet in some remote corner of the mansion, now hobbled into the room, and broke out into exclamations which indicated some new cause of alarm.

"O master!" and "O mistress!" were the only sounds she could for some time articulate, and then followed them up with, "The best in the house—the best in the house—

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set a' on the board, and a' will be little aneugh—There is auld Norna of Fitful-head, the most fearful woman in all the isles!"

"Where can she have been wandering?" said Mordaunt, not without some apparent sympathy with the surprise, if not with the alarm, of the old domestic; "but it is needless to ask—the worse the weather, the more likely is she to be a traveller."

"What new tramper is this?" echoed the distracted Baby, whom the quick succession of guests had driven well-nigh crazy with vexation. "I'll soon settle her wandering, I sall warrant, if my brother has but the soul of a man in him, or if there be a pair of jougs at Scalloway."

"The iron was never forged on stithy that would hauld her," said the old maid-servant. "She comes—she comes—God's sake speak her fair and canny, or we will have a ravelled hasp on the yarn windles!"

As she spoke, a woman, tall enough almost to touch the top of the door with her cap, stepped into the room, signing the cross as she entered, and pronouncing, with a solemn voice, "The blessing of God and Saint Ronald on the open door, and their broad malison and mine upon close-handed churls!"

"And wha are ye, that are say bauld wi' your blessing and banning in other folk's houses? What kind of country is this, that folk cannot sit quiet for an hour, and serve Heaven, and keep their bit gear thegither, without gangrel men and women coming thigging and sorning ane after another, like a string of wild-geese?"

This speech the understanding reader will easily saddle on Mistress Baby, and what effects it might have produced on the last stranger, can only be matter of conjecture; for the old servant and Mordaunt applied themselves

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at once to the party addressed, in order to deprecate her resentment; the former speaking to her some words of Norse, in a tone of intercession, and Mordaunt saying in English, "They are strangers, Norna, and know not your name or qualities; they are unacquainted, too, with the ways of this country, and therefore we must hold them excused for their lack of hospitality."

"I lack no hospitality, young man," said Triptolemus, "*miseris succurrere disco*—the goose that was destined to roost in the chimney till Michaelmas, is boiling in the pot for you; but if we had twenty geese, I see we are like to find mouths to eat them every feather—this must be amended."

"What must be amended, sordid slave?" said the stranger Norna, turning at once upon him with an emphasis that made him start—"What must be amended? Bring hither, if thou wilt, thy new-fangled coulters, spades, and harrows, alter the implements of our fathers from the ploughshare to the mouse-trap; but know thou art in the land that was won of old by the flaxen-haired Kempions of the North, and leave us their hospitality at least, to show we come of what was once noble and generous. I say to you beware—while Norna looks forth at the measureless waters, from the crest of Fitful-head, something is yet left that resembles power of defence. If the men of Thule have ceased to be champions, and to spread the banquet for the raven, the women have not forgotten the arts that lifted them of yore into queens and prophetesses."

The woman who pronounced this singular tirade, was as striking in appearance as extravagantly lofty in her pretensions and in her language. She might well have represented on the stage, so far as features, voice and

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stature were concerned, the Bonduca, or Boadicea of the Britons, or the sage Velleda, Aurinia, or any other fated Pythoness, who ever led to battle a tribe of the ancient Goths. Her features were high and well formed, and would have been handsome, but for the ravages of time and the effects of exposure to the severe weather of her country. Age, and perhaps sorrow, had quenched, in some degree, the fire of a dark-blue eye, whose hue almost approached to black, and had sprinkled snow on such parts of her tresses as had escaped from under her cap, and were dishevelled by the rigour of the storm. Her upper garment, which dropped with water, was of a coarse dark-coloured stuff, called wadmaal, then much used in the Zetland islands, as also in Iceland and Norway. But as she threw this cloak back from her shoulders, a short jacket, of dark-blue velvet, stamped with figures, became visible, and the vest, which corresponded to it, was of a crimson colour, and embroidered with tarnished silver. Her girdle was plated with silver ornaments, cut into the shape of planetary signs—her blue apron was embroidered with similar devices, and covered a petticoat of crimson cloth. Strong thick enduring shoes, of the half-dressed leather of the country, were tied with straps like those of the Roman buskins, over her scarlet stockings. She wore in her belt an ambiguous-looking weapon, which might pass for a sacrificing knife or dagger, as the imagination of the spectator chose to assign to the wearer the character of a priestess or of a sorceress. In her hand she held a staff, squared on all sides, and engraved with Runic characters and figures, forming one of those portable and perpetual calendars which were used among the ancient natives of Scandinavia, and which, to a superstitious eye, might have passed for a divining rod.

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Such were the appearance, features, and attire, of Norna of the Fitful-head, upon whom many of the inhabitants of the island looked with observance, many with fear, and almost all with a sort of veneration. Less pregnant circumstances of suspicion would, in any other part of Scotland, have exposed her to the investigation of those cruel inquisitors, who were then often invested with the delegated authority of the Privy Council, for the purpose of persecuting, torturing, and finally consigning to the flames, those who were accused of witchcraft or sorcery. But superstitions of this nature pass through two stages ere they become entirely obsolete. Those supposed to be possessed of supernatural powers, are venerated in the earlier stages of society. As religion and knowledge increase, they are first held in hatred and horror, and are finally regarded as impostors. Scotland was in the second state—the fear of witchcraft was great, and the hatred against those suspected of it intense. Zetland was as yet a little world by itself, where, among the lower and ruder classes, so much of the ancient northern superstition remained, as cherished the original veneration for those affecting supernatural knowledge, and power over the elements, which made a constituent part of the ancient Scandinavian creed. At least if the natives of Thule admitted that one class of magicians performed their feats by their alliance with Satan, they devoutly believed that others dealt with spirits of a different and less odious class—the ancient Dwarfs, called in Zetland, Trows, or Drows, the modern fairies, and so forth.

Among those who were supposed to be in league with disembodied spirits, this Norna, descended from, and representative of, a family, which had long pretended to such

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gifts, was so eminent, that the name assigned to her, which signifies one of those fatal sisters who weave the web of human fate, had been conferred in honour of her supernatural powers. The name by which she had been actually christened was carefully concealed by herself and her parents; for to its discovery they superstitiously annexed some fatal consequences. In those times, the doubt only occurred whether her supposed powers were acquired by lawful means. In our days, it would have been questioned whether she was an impostor, or whether her imagination was so deeply impressed with the mysteries of her supposed art, that she might be in some degree a believer in her own pretensions to supernatural knowledge. Certain it is, that she performed her part with such undoubting confidence, and such striking dignity of look and action, and evinced, at the same time, such strength of language, and energy of purpose, that it would have been difficult for the greatest sceptic to have doubted the reality of her enthusiasm, though he might smile at the pretensions to which it gave rise.

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CHAPTER VI.

—— If, by your art, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
TEMPEST.

THE storm had somewhat relaxed its rigour just before the entrance of Norna, otherwise she must have found it impossible to travel during the extremity of its fury. But she had hardly added herself so unexpectedly to the party whom chance had assembled at the dwelling of Triptolemus Yellowley, when the tempest suddenly resumed its former vehemence, and raged around the building with a fury which made the inmates insensible to any thing except the risk that the old mansion was about to fall above their heads.

Mistress Baby gave vent to her fears in loud exclamations of "The Lord guide us—this is surely the last day—what kind of a country of guisards and gyre-carlines is this!—and you, ye fool carle," she added, turning on her brother, (for all her passions had a touch of acidity in them,) "to quit the bonny Mearns land to come here, where there is naething but sturdy beggars and gaberlunzies within ane's house, and Heaven's anger on the outside on't!"

"I tell you, sister Baby," answered the insulted agriculturist, "that all shall be reformed and amended—excepting," he added, betwixt his teeth, "the scaulding humours

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of an ill-natured jaud, that can add bitterness to the very storm."

The old domestic and the pedlar meanwhile exhausted themselves in entreaties to Norna, of which, as they were couched in the Norse language, the master of the house understood nothing.

She listened to them with a haughty and unmoved air, and replied at length aloud, and in English—"I will not. What if this house be strewed in ruins before morning—where would be the world's want in the crazed projector, and the niggardly pinch-commons, by which it is inhabited? They will needs come to reform Zetland customs, let them try how they like a Zetland storm.—You that would not perish quit this house."

The pedlar seized on his little knapsack, and began hastily to brace it on his back; the old maid-servant cast her cloak about her shoulders, and both seemed to be in the act of leaving the house as fast as they could.

Triptolemus Yellowley, somewhat commoved by these appearances, asked Mordaunt, with a voice which faltered with apprehension, whether he thought there was any, that is, so very much danger?

"I cannot tell," answered the youth, "I have scarce ever seen such a storm. Norna can tell us better than any one when it will abate; for no one in these islands can judge of the weather like her."

"And is that all thou thinkest Norna can do?" said the Sibyl; "thou shalt know her powers are not bounded within such a narrow space. Hear me, Mordaunt, youth of a foreign land, but of a friendly heart—Dost thou quit this doomed mansion with those who now prepare to leave it?"

"I do not—I will not, Norna," replied Mordaunt; "I

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know not your motive for desiring me to remove, and I will not leave, upon these dark threats, the house in which I have been kindly received in such a tempest as this. If the owners are unaccustomed to our practice of unlimited hospitality, I am the more obliged to them that they have relaxed their usages, and opened their doors in my behalf."

"He is a brave lad," said Mrs. Baby, whose superstitious feelings had been daunted by the threats of the supposed sorceress, and who, amidst her eager, narrow, and repining disposition, had, like all who possess marked character, some sparks of higher feeling, which made her sympathize with generous sentiments, though she thought it too expensive to entertain them at her own cost—"He is a brave lad," she again repeated, "and worthy of ten geese, if I had them to boil for him, or roast either. I'll warrant him a gentleman's son, and no churl's blood."

"Hear me, young Mordaunt," said Norna, "and depart from this house. Fate has high views on you—you shall not remain in this hovel to be crushed amid its worthless ruins, with the relics of its more worthless inhabitants, whose life is as little to the world as the vegetation of the house-leek, which now grows on their thatch, and which shall soon be crushed amongst their mangled limbs."

"I—I—I will go forth," said Yellowley, who, despite of his bearing himself scholarly and wisely, was beginning to be terrified for the issue of the adventure; for the house was old, and the walls rocked formidably to the blast.

"To what purpose?" said his sister. "I trust the Prince of the power of the air has not yet such like power

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over those that are made in God's image, that a good house should fall about our heads, because a randy quean" (here she darted a fierce glance at the Pythoness) "should boast us with her glamour, as if we were sae mony dogs to crouch at her bidding!"

"I was only wanting," said Triptolemus, ashamed of his motion, "to look at the bear-braird, which must be sair laid wi' this tempest; but if this honest woman like to bide wi' us, I think it were best to let us a' sit doun canny thegither, till it's working weather again."

"Honest woman!" echoed Baby—"Foul warlock thief!—Aroint ye, ye limmer!" she added, addressing Norna directly; "out of an honest house, or, shame fa' me, but I'll take the bittle * to you!"

Norna cast on her a look of supreme contempt; then, stepping to the window, seemed engaged in deep contemplation of the heavens, while the old maid-servant Tronda, drawing close to her mistress, implored, for the sake of all that was dear to man or woman, "Do not provoke Norna of Fitful-head! You have no sic woman on the mainland of Scotland—she can ride on one of these clouds as easily as man ever rode on a sheltie."

"I shall live to see her ride on the reek of a fat tar-barrel," said Mistress Baby; "and that will be a fit pacing palfrey for her."

Again Norna regarded the enraged Mrs. Baby Yellowley with a look of that unutterable scorn which her haughty features could so well express, and moving to the window which looked to the north-west, from which

* The beetle with which the Scottish housewives used to perform the office of the modern mangle, by beating newly washed linen on a smooth stone for the purpose, called the beetling-stone.

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quarter the gale seemed at present to blow, she stood for some time with her arms crossed, looking out upon the leaden-coloured sky, obscured as it was by the thick drift, which, coming on in successive gusts of tempest, left ever and anon sad and dreary intervals of expectation betwixt the dying and the reviving blast.

Norna regarded this war of the elements as one to whom their strife was familiar; yet the stern serenity of her features had in it a cast of awe, and at the same time of authority, as the cabalist may be supposed to look upon the spirit he has evoked, and which, though he knows how to subject him to his spell, bears still an aspect appalling to flesh and blood. The attendants stood by in different attitudes, expressive of their various feelings. Mordaunt, though not indifferent to the risk in which they stood, was more curious than alarmed. He had heard of Norna's alleged power over the elements, and now expected an opportunity of judging for himself of its reality. Triptolemus Yellowley was confounded at what seemed to be far beyond the bounds of his philosophy; and, if the truth must be spoken, the worthy agriculturist was greatly more frightened than inquisitive. His sister was not in the least curious on the subject; but it was difficult to say whether anger or fear predominated in her sharp eyes and thin compressed lips. The pedlar and old Tronda, confident that the house would never fall while the redoubted Norna was beneath its roof, held themselves ready for a start the instant she should take her departure.

Having looked on the sky for some time in a fixed attitude and with the most profound silence, Norna at once, yet with a slow and elevated gesture, extended her staff of black oak towards that part of the heavens from

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which the blast came hardest, and in the midst of its fury chanted a Norwegian invocation, still preserved in the Island of Uist, under the name of the Song of the Reim-kennar, though some call it the Song of the Tempest. The following is a free translation, it being impossible to render literally many of the elliptical and metaphorical terms of expression, peculiar to the ancient Northern poetry :—

1.

"Stern eagle of the far north-west,
Thou that bearest in thy grasp the thunderbolt,
Thou whose rushing pinions stir ocean to madness,
Thou the destroyer of herds, thou the scatterer of navies,
Thou the breaker down of towers,
Amidst the scream of thy rage,
Amidst the rushing of thy onward wings,
Though thy scream be loud as the cry of a perishing nation,
Though the rushing of thy wings be like the roar of ten thousand waves,
Yet hear, in thine ire and thy haste,
Hear thou the voice of the Reim-kennar.

2.

"Thou hast met the pine-trees of Drontheim,
Their dark-green heads lie prostrate beside their uprooted stems;
Thou hast met the rider of the ocean,
The tall, the strong bark of the fearless rover,
And she has struck to thee the topsail
That she had not veiled to a royal armada;
Thou hast met the tower that bears its crest among the clouds,
The battled massive tower of the Jarl of former days,
And the cope-stone of the turret
Is lying upon its hospitable hearth;
But thou too shalt stoop, proud compeller of clouds,
When thou hearest the voice of the Reim-kennar.

3.

"There are verses that can stop the stag in the forest,
Ay, and when the dark-colour'd dog is opening on his track;

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There are verses can make the wild hawk pause on the wing,
Like the falcon that wears the hood and the jesses,
And who knows the shrill whistle of the fowler.
Thou who canst mock at the scream of the drowning mariner,
And the crash of the ravaged forest,
And the groan of the overwhelm'd crowds,
When the church hath fallen in the moment of prayer,
There are sounds which thou also must list,
When they are chanted by the voice of the Reim-kennar.

4.

"Enough of woe hast thou wrought on the ocean,
The widows wring their hands on the beach;
Enough of woe hast thou wrought on the land,
The husbandman folds his arms in despair;
Cease thou the waving of thy pinions,
Let the ocean repose in her dark strength;
Cease thou the flashing of thine eye,
Let the thunderbolt sleep in the armory of Odin;
Be thou still at my bidding, viewless racer of the north-western heaven,
Sleep thou at the voice of Norna the Reim-kennar!"

We have said, that Mordaunt was naturally fond of romantic poetry and romantic situation; it is not therefore surprising that he listened with interest to the wild address thus uttered to the wildest wind of the compass, in a tone of such dauntless enthusiasm. But though he had heard so much of the Runic rhyme and of the northern spell, in the country where he had so long dwelt, he was not on this occasion so credulous as to believe that the tempest, which had raged so lately, and which was now beginning to decline, was subdued before the charmed verse of Norna. Certain it was, that the blast seemed passing away, and the apprehended danger was already over; but it was not improbable that this issue had been for some time foreseen by the Pythoness, through signs of the weather imperceptible to those who had not dwelt

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long in the country, or had not bestowed on the meteorological phenomena the attention of a strict and close observer. Of Norna's experience he had no doubt, and that went a far away to explain what seemed supernatural in her demeanour. Yet still the noble countenance, half-shaded by dishevelled tresses, the air of majesty with which, in a tone of menace as well as of command, she addressed the viewless spirit of the tempest, gave him a strong inclination to believe in the ascendency of the occult arts over the powers of nature; for, if a woman ever moved on earth to whom such authority over the ordinary laws of the universe could belong, Norna of Fitful-head, judging from bearing, figure, and face, was born to that high destiny.

The rest of the company were less slow in receiving conviction. To Tronda and the jagger none was necessary; they had long believed in the full extent of Norna's authority over the elements. But Triptolemus and his sister gazed at each other with wondering and alarmed looks, especially when the wind began perceptibly to decline, as was remarkably visible during the pauses which Norna made betwixt the strophes of her incantation. A long silence followed the last verse, until Norna resumed her chant, but with a changed and more soothing modulation of voice and tune.

"Eagle of the far north-western waters,
Thou hast heard the voice of the Reim-kennar,
Thou hast closed thy wide sails at her bidding,
And folded them in peace by thy side.
My blessing be on thy retiring path!
When thou stoopest from thy place on high,
Soft be thy slumbers in the caverns of the unknown ocean.
Rest till destiny shall again awaken thee;
Eagle of the north-west, thou hast heard the voice of the Reim-kennar!"

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"A pretty sang that would be to keep the corn from shaking in har'st," whispered the agriculturist to his sister; "we must speak her fair, Baby—she will maybe part with the secret for a hundred punds Scots."

"An hundred fules' heads!" replied Baby—"bid her five marks of ready siller. I never knew a witch in my life but she was as poor as Job."

Norna turned towards them as if she had guessed their thoughts; it may be that she did so. She passed them with a look of the most sovereign contempt, and walking to the table on which the preparations for Mrs. Barbara's frugal meal were already disposed, she filled a small wooden quaigh from an earthen pitcher which contained bland, a subacid liquor made out of the serous part of the milk. She broke a single morsel from a barley-cake, and having eaten and drunk, returned towards the churlish hosts. "I give you no thanks," she said, "for my refreshment, for you bid me not welcome to it; and thanks bestowed on a churl are like the dew of heaven on the cliffs of Foulah, where it finds nought that can be refreshed by its influences. I give you no thanks," she said again, but drawing from her pocket a leathern purse that seemed large and heavy, she added, "I pay you with what you will value more than the gratitude of the whole inhabitants of Hialtland. Say not that Norna of Fitful-head hath eaten of your bread and drunk of your cup, and left you sorrowing for the charge to which she hath put your house." So saying, she laid on the table a small piece of antique gold coin, bearing the rude and half-defaced effigies of some ancient northern king.

Triptolemus and his sister exclaimed against this liberality with vehemence; the first, protesting that he

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kept no public, and the other exclaiming, "Is the carline mad? Heard ye ever of ony of the gentle house of Clinkscale that gave meat for siller?"

"Or for love either?" muttered her brother; "haud to that, tittie."

"What are ye whittie-whattieing about, ye gowk?" said his gentle sister, who suspected the tenor of his murmurs; "gie the ladie back her bonnie-die there, and be blithe to be sae rid on't—it will be a sclate-stane the morn, if not something worse."

The honest factor lifted the money to return it, yet could not help being struck when he saw the impression, and his hand trembled as he handed it to his sister.

"Yes," said the Pythoness again, as if she read the thoughts of the astonished pair, "you have seen that coin before—beware how you use it! It thrives not with the sordid or the mean-souled—it was won with honourable danger, and must be expended with honourable liberality. The treasure which lies under a cold hearth will one day, like the hidden talent, bear witness against its avaricious possessors."

This last obscure intimation seemed to raise the alarm and the wonder of Mrs. Baby and her brother to the uttermost. The latter tried to stammer out something like an invitation to Norna to tarry with them all night, or at least to take share of the "dinner," so he at first called it; but looking at the company, and remembering the limited contents of the pot, he corrected the phrase, and hoped she would take some part of the "snack, which would be on the table ere a man could loose a pleugh."

"I eat not here—I sleep not here," replied Norna—"nay, I relieve you not only of my own presence, but I will dismiss your unwelcome guests.—Mordaunt," she

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added, addressing young Mertoun, "the dark fit is past, and your father looks for you this evening."

"Do you return in that direction?" said Mordaunt. "I will but eat a morsel, and give you my aid, good mother, on the road. The brooks must be out, and the journey perilous."

"Our ways lie different," answered the Sibyl, "and Norna needs not mortal arm to aid her on the way. I am summoned far to the east, by those who know well how to smooth my passage.—For thee, Bryce Snailsfoot," she continued, speaking to the pedlar, "speed thee on to Sumburgh—the Roost will afford thee a gallant harvest, and worthy the gathering in. Much goodly ware will ere now be seeking a new owner, and the careful skipper will sleep still enough in the deep haaf, and care not that bale and kist are dashing against the shores."

"Na, na, good mother," answered Snailsfoot, "I desire no man's life for my private advantage, and am just grateful for the blessing of Providence on my sma' trade. But doubtless one man's loss is another's gain; and as these storms destroy a' thing on land, it is but fair they suld send us something by sea. Sae, taking the freedom, like yoursell, mother, to borrow a lump of barley-bread, and a draught of bland, I will bid good day, and thank you, to this good gentleman and lady, and e'en go on my way to Jarlshof, as you advise."

"Ay," replied the Pythoness, "where the slaughter is, the eagles will be gathered; and where the wreck is on the shore, the jagger is as busy to purchase spoil as the shark to gorge upon the dead."

This rebuke, if it was intended for such, seemed above the comprehension of the travelling merchant, who, bent upon gain, assumed the knapsack and ellwand, and

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asked Mordaunt, with the familiarity permitted in a wild country, whether he would not take company along with him?"

"I wait to eat some dinner with Mr. Yellowley and Mrs. Baby," answered the youth, "and will set forward in half an hour."

"Then I'll just take my piece in my hand," said the pedlar. Accordingly he muttered a benediction, and, without more ceremony, helped himself to what, in Mrs. Baby's covetous eyes, appeared to be two-thirds of the bread, took a long pull at the jug of bland, seized on a handful of the small fish called sillocks, which the domestic was just placing on the board, and left the room without farther ceremony."

"My certie," said the despoiled Mrs. Baby, "there is the chapman's drouth * and his hunger baith, as folk say! If the laws against vagrants be executed this gate—It's no that I wad shut the door against decent folk," she said, looking to Mordaunt, "more especially in such judgment-weather. But I see the goose is dished, poor thing."

This she spoke in a tone of affection for the smoked goose, which, though it had long been an inanimate inhabitant of her chimney, was far more interesting to Mrs. Baby in that state, than when it screamed amongst the clouds. Mordaunt laughed and took his seat, then turned to look for Norna; but she had glided from the apartment during the discussion with the pedlar.

"I am glad she is gane, the dour carline," said Mrs.

* The chapman's drouth, that is, the pedlar's thirst, is proverbial in Scotland, because these pedestrian traders were in the use of modestly asking only for a drink of water, when, in fact, they were desirous of food.

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Baby, "though she has left that piece of gowd to be an everlasting shame to us."

"Whisht, mistress, for the love of heaven!" said Tronda Dronsdaughter; "wha kens where she may be this moment?—we are no sure but she may hear us, though we cannot see her."

Mistress Baby cast a startled eye around, and, instantly recovering herself, for she was naturally courageous as well as violent, said, "I bade her aroint before, and I bid her aroint again, whether she sees me or hears me, or whether she's ower the cairn and awa.—And you, ye silly sumph," she said to poor Yellowley, "what do ye stand glowering there for?—*You* a Saunt Andrew's student!—*you* studied lair and Latin humanities, as ye ca' them, and daunted wi' the clavers of an auld randie wife! Say your best college grace, man, and witch, or nae witch, we'll eat our dinner, and defy her. And for the value of the gowden piece, it shall never be said I pouched her siller. I will gie it to some poor body—that is, I will test* upon it at my death, and keep it for a purse-penny till that day comes, and that's no using it in the way of spending-siller. Say your best college grace, man, and let us eat and drink in the meantime."

"Ye had muckle better say an *oraamus* to Saint Ronald, and fling a saxpence ower your left shouther, master," said Tronda.†

"That ye may pick it up, ye jaud," said the implacable

* Test upon it, *i. e.* leave it in my will; a mode of bestowing charity, to which many are partial as well as the good dame in the text.

† Although the Zetlanders were early reconciled to the reformed faith, some ancient practices of Catholic superstition survived long among them. In very stormy weather a fisher would vow an *oramus* to Saint Ronald, and acquitted himself of the obligation by throwing a small piece of money in at the window of a ruinous chapel.

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Mistress Baby; "it will be lang or ye win the worth of it ony other gate.—Sit down, Triptolemus, and mindna the words of a daft wife."

"Daft or wise," replied Yellowley, very much disconcerted, "she kens more than I would wish she kend. It was awfu' to see sic a wind fa' at the voice of flesh and blood like oursells—and then yon about the hearth-stane —I cannot but think——"

"If ye cannot but think," said Mrs. Baby, very sharply, "at least ye can haud your tongue?"

The agriculturist made no reply, but sate down to their scanty meal, and did the honours of it with unusual heartiness to his new guest, the first of the intruders who had arrived, and the last who left them. The sillocks speedily disappeared, and the smoked goose, with its appendages, took wing so effectually, that Tronda, to whom the polishing of the bones had been destined, found the task accomplished, or nearly so, to her hand. After dinner, the host produced his bottle of brandy; but Mordaunt, whose general habits were as sober almost as those of his father, laid a very light tax upon this unusual exertion of hospitality.

During the meal, they learned so much of young Mordaunt, and of his father, that even Baby resisted his wish to reassume his wet garments, and pressed him (at the risk of an expensive supper being added to the charges of the day) to tarry with them till the next morning. But what Norna had said excited the youth's wish to reach home, nor, however far the hospitality of Stourburgh was extended in his behalf, did the house present any particular temptations to induce him to remain there longer. He therefore accepted the loan of the factor's clothes, promising to return them, and send for his own;

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and took a civil leave of his host and Mistress Baby, the latter of whom, however affected by the loss of her goose, could not but think the cost well bestowed (since it was to be expended at all) upon so handsome and cheerful a youth.

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CHAPTER VII.

> She does no work by halves, yon raving ocean;
> Engulfing those she strangles, her wild womb
> Affords the mariners whom she hath dealt on,
> Their death at once, and sepulchre.
>
> OLD PLAY.

THERE were ten "lang Scots miles" betwixt Stourburgh and Jarlshof; and though the pedestrian did not number all the impediments which crossed Tam o' Shanter's path,—for, in a country where there are neither hedges nor stone enclosures, there can be neither "slaps nor stiles,"—yet the number and nature of the "mosses and waters" which he had to cross in his peregrination, were fully sufficient to balance the account, and to render his journey as toilsome and dangerous as Tam o' Shanter's celebrated retreat from Ayr. Neither witch nor warlock crossed Mordaunt's path, however. The length of the day was already considerable, and he arrived safe at Jarlshof by eleven o'clock at night. All was still and dark round the mansion, and it was not till he had whistled twice or thrice beneath Swertha's window, that she replied to the signal.

At the first sound, Swertha fell into an agreeable dream of a young whale-fisher, who some forty years since used to make such a signal beneath the window of her hut; at the second, she waked to remember that Johnnie Fea had slept sound among the frozen waves of Greenland for

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this many a year, and that she was Mr. Mertoun's governante at Jarlshof; at the third, she arose and opened the window.

"Whae is that," she demanded, "at sic an hour of the night?"

"It is I," said the youth.

"And what for comena ye in? The door's on the latch, and there is a gathering peat on the kitchen fire, and a spunk beside it—ye can light your ain candle."

"All well," replied Mordaunt; "but I want to know how my father is?"

"Just in his ordinary, gude gentleman—asking for you, Maister Mordaunt; ye are ower far and ower late in your walks, young gentleman."

"Then the dark hour has passed, Swertha?"

"In troth has it, Maister Mordaunt," answered the governante; "and your father is very reasonably good-natured for him, poor gentleman. I spake to him twice yesterday without his speaking first; and the first time he answered me as civil as you could do, and the neist time he bade me no plague him; and then, thought I, three times were aye canny, so I spake to him again for luck's-sake, and he called me a chattering old devil; but it was quite and clean in a civil sort of way."

"Enough, enough, Swertha," answered Mordaunt; "and now get up, and find me something to eat, for I have dined but poorly."

"Then you have been at the new folk's at Stourburgh; for there is no another house in a' the Isles but they wad hae gi'en ye the best share of the best they had? Saw ye aught of Norna of the Fitful-head? She went to Stourburgh this morning, and returned to the town at night."

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"Returned!—then she is here? How could she travel three leagues and better in so short a time?"

"Wha kens how she travels?" replied Swertha; "but I heard her tell the Ranzelman wi' my ain lugs, that she intended that day to have gone on to Burgh-Westra, to speak with Minna Troil, but she had seen that at Stourburgh, (indeed she said at Harfra, for she never calls it by the other name of Stourburgh,) that sent her back to our town. But gang your ways round, and ye shall have plenty of supper—ours is nae toom pantry, and still less a locked ane, though my master be a stranger, and no just that tight in the upper rigging, as the Ranzelman says."

Mordaunt walked round to the kitchen accordingly, where Swertha's care speedily accommodated him with a plentiful, though coarse meal, which indemnified him for the scanty hospitality he had experienced at Stourburgh.

In the morning, some feelings of fatigue made young Mertoun later than usual in leaving his bed; so that, contrary to what was the ordinary case, he found his father in the apartment where they ate, and which served them indeed for every common purpose, save that of a bedchamber or of a kitchen. The son greeted the father in mute reverence, and waited until he should address him.

"You were absent yesterday, Mordaunt?" said his father. Mordaunt's absence had lasted a week and more; but he had often observed that his father never seemed to notice how time passed during the period when he was affected with his sullen vapours. He assented to what the elder Mr. Mertoun had said.

"And you were at Burgh-Westra, as I think?" continued his father.

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"Yes, sir," replied Mordaunt.

The elder Mertoun was then silent for some time, and paced the floor in deep silence, with an air of sombre reflection, which seemed as if he were about to relapse into his moody fit. Suddenly turning to his son, however, he observed, in the tone of a query, "Magnus Troil has two daughters—they must be now young women; they are thought handsome, of course?"

"Very generally, sir," answered Mordaunt, rather surprised to hear his father making any inquiries about the individuals of a sex which he usually thought so light of, a surprise which was much increased by the next question, put as abruptly as the former.

"Which think you the handsomest?"

"I, sir?" replied his son with some wonder, but without embarrassment—"I really am no judge—I never considered which was absolutely the handsomest. They are both very pretty young women."

"You evade my question, Mordaunt; perhaps I have some very particular reason for my wish to be acquainted with your taste in this matter. I am not used to waste words for no purpose. I ask you again, which of Magnus Troil's daughters you think most handsome?"

"Really, sir," replied Mordaunt—"but you only jest in asking me such a question."

"Young man," replied Mertoun, with eyes which began tc roll and sparkle with impatience, "I *never* jest. I desire an answer to my question."

"Then, upon my word, sir," said Mordaunt, "it is not in my power to form a judgment betwixt the young ladies—they are both very pretty, but by no means like each other. Minna is dark-haired, and more grave than her sister—more serious, but by no means either dull or sullen."

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"Um," replied his father; "you have been gravely brought up, and this Minna, I suppose, pleases you most?"

"No, sir, really I can give her no preference over her sister Brenda, who is as gay as a lamb in a spring morning—less tall than her sister, but so well formed, and so excellent a dancer——"

"That she is best qualified to amuse the young man, who has a dull home and a moody father?" said Mr. Mertoun.

Nothing in his father's conduct had ever surprised Mordaunt so much as the obstinacy with which he seemed to pursue a theme so foreign to his general train of thought, and habits of conversation; but he contented himself with answering once more, "that both the young ladies were highly admirable, but he had never thought of them with the wish to do either injustice, by ranking her lower than her sister—that others would probably decide between them, as they happened to be partial to a grave or a gay disposition, or to a dark or fair complexion; but that he could see no excellent quality in the one that was not balanced by something equally captivating in the other."

It is possible that even the coolness with which Mordaunt made this explanation might not have satisfied his father concerning the subject of investigation; but Swertha at this moment entered with breakfast, and the youth, notwithstanding his late supper, engaged in that meal with an air which satisfied Mertoun that he held it matter of more grave importance than the conversation which they had just had, and that he had nothing more to say upon the subject explanatory of the answers he had already given. He shaded his brow with his hand, and

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looked long fixedly upon the young man as he was busied with his morning meal. There was neither abstraction nor a sense of being observed in any of his motions; all was frank, natural, and open.

"He is fancy-free," muttered Mertoun to himself—"so young, so lively, and so imaginative, so handsome and so attractive in face and person, strange, that at his age, and in his circumstances, he should have avoided the meshes which catch all the world beside!"

When the breakfast was over, the elder Mertoun, instead of proposing, as usual, that his son, who awaited his commands, should betake himself to one branch or other of his studies, assumed his hat and staff, and desired that Mordaunt should accompany him to the top of the cliff, called Sumburgh-head, and from thence look out upon the state of the ocean, agitated as it must still be by the tempest of the preceding day. Mordaunt was at the age when young men willingly exchange sedentary pursuits for active exercise, and started up with alacrity to comply with his father's request; and in the course of a few minutes, they were mounting together the hill, which, ascending from the land side in a long, steep, and grassy slope, sinks at once from the summit to the sea in an abrupt and tremendous precipice.

The day was delightful; there was just so much motion in the air as to disturb the little fleecy clouds which were scattered on the horizon, and by floating them occasionally over the sun, to chequer the landscape with that variety of light and shade which often gives to a bare and unenclosed scene, for the time at least, a species of charm approaching to the varieties of a cultivated and planted country. A thousand flitting hues of light and shade played over the expanse of wild moor, rocks, and

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inlets, which, as they climbed higher and higher, spread in wide and wider circuit around them.

The elder Mertoun often paused and looked around upon the scene, and for some time his son supposed that he halted to enjoy its beauties; but as they ascended still higher up the hill, he remarked his shortened breath and his uncertain and toilsome step, and became assured, with some feelings of alarm, that his father's strength was, for the moment, exhausted, and that he found the ascent more toilsome and fatiguing than usual. To draw close to his side, and offer him in silence the assistance of his arm, was an act of youthful deference to advanced age, as well as of filial reverence; and Mertoun seemed at first so to receive it, for he took in silence the advantage of the aid thus afforded him.

It was but for two or three minutes, however, that the father availed himself of his son's support. They had not ascended fifty yards farther, ere he pushed Mordaunt suddenly, if not rudely, from him; and, as if stung into exertion by some sudden recollection, began to mount the acclivity with such long and quick steps, that Mordaunt, in his turn, was obliged to exert himself to keep pace with him. He knew his father's peculiarity of disposition; he was aware from many slight circumstances, that he loved him not even while he took much pains with his education, and while he seemed to be the sole object of his care upon earth. But the conviction had never been more strongly or more powerfully forced upon him than by the hasty churlishness with which Mertoun rejected from a son that assistance, which most elderly men are willing to receive from youths with whom they are but slightly connected, as a tribute which it is alike graceful to yield and pleasing to receive. Mertoun, however, did

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not seem to perceive the effect which his unkindness had produced upon his son's feelings. He paused upon a sort of level terrace which they had now attained, and addressed his son with an indifferent tone, which seemed in some degree affected.

"Since you have so few inducements, Mordaunt, to remain in these wild islands, I suppose you sometimes wish to look a little more abroad into the world?"

"By my word, sir," replied Mordaunt, "I cannot say I ever have thought on such a subject."

"And why not, young man?" demanded his father; "it were but natural, I think, at your age. At your age, the fair and varied breadth of Britain could not gratify me, much less the compass of a sea-girdled peat-moss."

"I have never thought of leaving Zetland, sir," replied the son. "I am happy here, and have friends. You yourself, sir, would miss me, unless indeed ——"

"Why, thou wouldst not persuade me," said his father, somewhat hastily, "that you stay here, or desire to stay here, for the love of me?"

"Why should I not, sir?" answered Mordaunt, mildly; "it is my duty, and I hope I have hitherto performed it."

"Oh, ay," repeated Mertoun, in the same tone—"your duty—your duty. So it is the duty of the dog to follow the groom that feeds him."

"And does he not do so, sir?" said Mordaunt.

"Ay," said his father, turning his head aside; "but he fawns only on those who caress him."

"I hope, sir," replied Mordaunt, "I have not been found deficient?"

"Say no more on't—say no more on't," said Mertoun, abruptly, "we have both done enough by each other—we must soon part—Let that be our comfort—if our separation should require comfort."

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"I shall be ready to obey your wishes," said Mordaunt, not altogether displeased at what promised him an opportunity of looking farther abroad into the world. "I presume it will be your pleasure that I commence my travels with a season at the whale-fishing."

"Whale-fishing!" replied Mertoun; "that were a mode indeed of seeing the world! but thou speakest but as thou hast learned. Enough of this for the present. Tell me where you had shelter from the storm yesterday?"

"At Stourburgh, the house of the new factor from Scotland."

"A pedantic, fantastic, visionary schemer," said Mertoun—"and whom saw you there?"

"His sister, sir," replied Mordaunt, "and old Norna of the Fitful-head."

"What! the mistress of the potent spell," answered Mertoun, with a sneer—"she who can change the wind by pulling her curch on one side, as King Erick used to do by turning his cap? The dame journeys far from home—how fares she? Does she get rich by selling favourable winds to those who art port-bound?"*

* The King of Sweden, the same Eric quoted by Mordaunt, "was," says Olaus Magnus, "in his time held second to none in the magical art; and he was so familiar with the evil spirits whom he worshipped, that what way soever he turned his cap, the wind would presently blow that way. For this he was called Windy-cap."—*Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus, Romæ*, 1555. It is well known that the Laplanders drive a profitable trade in selling *winds*, but it is perhaps less notorious, that within these few years such a commodity might be purchased on British ground, where it was likely to be in great request. At the village of Stromness, on the Orkney main island, called Pomona, lived, in 1814, an aged dame, called Bessie Millie, who helped out her subsistence by selling favourable winds to mariners. He was a venturous master of a vessel who left the roadstead of Stromness without paying his offering to propitiate Bessie Millie; her fee was ex-

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"I really do not know, sir," said Mordaunt, whom certain recollections prevented from freely entering into his father's humour.

"You think the matter too serious to be jested with, or perhaps esteem her merchandise too light to be cared after," continued Mertoun, in the same sarcastic tone, which was the nearest approach he ever made to cheerfulness; "but consider it more deeply. Every thing in the universe is bought and sold, and why not wind, if the merchant can find purchasers? The earth is rented, from its surface down to its most central mines;—the fire, and the means of feeding it, are currently bought and sold;—the wretches that sweep the boisterous ocean with their nets, pay ransom for the privilege of being drowned in it. What title has the air to be exempted from the universal course of traffic? All above the earth, under the earth, and around the earth, has its price, its sellers, and its purchasers. In many countries the priests will sell you a

tremely moderate, being exactly sixpence, for which, as she explained herself, she boiled her kettle and gave the bark advantage of her prayers, for she disclaimed all unlawful arts. The wind thus petitioned for was sure, she said, to arrive, though sometimes the mariners had to wait some time for it. The woman's dwelling and appearance were not unbecoming her pretensions; her house, which was on the brow of the steep hill on which Stromness is founded, was only accessible by a series of dirty and precipitous lanes, and for exposure might have been the abode of Eolus himself, in whose commodities the inhabitant dealt. She herself was, as she told us, nearly one hundred years o'd, withered and dried up like a mummy. A clay-coloured kerchief folded round her head, corresponded in colour to her corpse-like complexion. Two light-blue eyes that gleamed with a lustre like that of insanity, an utterance of astonishing rapidity, a nose and chin that almost met together, and a ghastly expression of cunning, gave her the effect of Hecaté. She remembered Gow the pirate, who had been a native of these islands, in which he closed his career, as mentioned in the preface. Such was Bessie Millie, to whom the mariners paid a sort of tribute, with a feeling betwixt jest and earnest.

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portion of heaven—in all countries men are willing to buy, in exchange for health, wealth, and peace of conscience, a full allowance of hell. Why should not Norna pursue her traffic?"

"Nay, I know no reason against it," replied Mordaunt; "only I wish she would part with the commodity in smaller quantities. Yesterday she was a wholesale dealer—whoever treated with her had too good a pennyworth."

"It is even so," said the father, pausing on the verge of the wild promontory which they had attained, where the huge precipice sinks abruptly down on the wide and tempestuous ocean, "and the effects are still visible."

The face of that lofty cape is composed of the soft and crumbling stone called sand-flag, which gradually becomes decomposed, and yields to the action of the atmosphere, and is split into large masses, that hang loose upon the verge of the precipice, and, detached from it by the fury of the tempests, often descends with great fury into the vexed abyss which lashes the foot of the rock. Numbers of these huge fragments lie strewed beneath the rocks from which they have fallen, and amongst these the tide foams and rages with a fury peculiar to these latitudes.

At the period when Mertoun and his son looked from the verge of the precipice, the wide sea still heaved and swelled with the agitation of yesterday's storm, which had been far too violent in its effects on the ocean to subside speedily. The tide therefore poured on the headland with a fury deafening to the ear, and dizzying to the eye, threatening instant destruction to whatever might be at the time involved in its current. The sight of Nature, in her magnificence, or in her beauty, or in her terrors, has at all times an overpowering interest, which even habit cannot greatly weaken; and both father and son sat

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themselves down on the cliff to look out upon that unbounded war of waters, which rolled in their wrath to the foot of the precipice.

At once Mordaunt, whose eyes were sharper, and probably his attention more alert than that of his father, started up and exclaimed, "God in heaven! there is a vessel in the Roost."

Mertoun looked to the north-westward, and an object was visible amid the rolling tide. "She shews no sail," he observed; and immediately added, after looking at the object through his spy-glass, "She is dismasted, and lies a sheer hulk upon the water."

"And is drifting on the Sumburgh-head," exclaimed Mordaunt, struck with horror, "without the slightest means of weathering the cape!"

"She makes no effort," answered his father; "she is probably deserted by her crew."

"And in such a day as yesterday," replied Mordaunt, "when no open boat could live were she manned with the best men ever handled an oar—all must have perished."

"It is most probable," said his father, with stern composure; "and one day, sooner or later, all must have perished. What signifies whether the Fowler, whom nothing escapes, caught them up at one swoop from yonder shattered deck, or whether he clutched them individually, as chance gave them to his grasp? What signifies it?—the deck, the battle-field, are scarce more fatal to us than our table and our bed; and we are saved from the one, merely to drag out a heartless and wearisome existence, till we perish at the other. Would the hour were come—that hour which reason would teach us to wish for, were it not that nature has implanted the

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fear of it so strongly within us! You wonder at such a reflection, because life is yet new to you. Ere you have attained my age, it will be the familiar companion of your thoughts."

"Surely, sir," replied Mordaunt, "such distaste to life is not the necessary consequence of advanced age?"

"To all who have sense to estimate that which it is really worth," said Mertoun. "Those who, like Magnus Troil, possess so much of the animal impulses about them, as to derive pleasure from sensual gratification, may perhaps, like the animals, feel pleasure in mere existence."

Mordaunt liked neither the doctrine nor the example. He thought a man who discharged his duties towards others as well as the good old Udaller, had a better right to have the sun shine fair on his setting, than that which he might derive from mere insensibility. But he let the subject drop; for to dispute with his father, had always the effect of irritating him; and again he adverted to the condition of the wreck.

The hulk, for it was little better, was now in the very midst of the current, and drifting at a great rate towards the foot of the precipice, upon whose verge they were placed. Yet it was a long while ere they had a distinct view of the object which they had at first seen as a black speck amongst the waters, and then, at a nearer distance, like a whale, which now scarce shows its back-fin above the waves, now throws to view its large black side. Now, however, they could more distinctly observe the appearance of the ship, for the huge swelling waves which bore her forward to the shore, heaved her alternately high upon the surface, and then plunged her into the trough or furrow of the sea. She seemed a vessel of two or three

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hundred tons, fitted up for defence, for they could see her port-holes. She had been dismasted probably in the gale of the preceding day, and lay water-logged on the waves, a prey to their violence. It appeared certain, that the crew, finding themselves unable either to direct the vessel's course, or to relieve her by pumping, had taken to their boats, and left her to her fate. All apprehensions were therefore unnecessary, so far as the immediate loss of human lives was concerned; and yet it was not without a feeling of breathless awe, that Mordaunt and his father beheld the vessel—that rare masterpiece by which human genius aspires to surmount the waves, and contend with the winds, upon the point of falling a prey to them.

Onward she came, the large black hulk seeming larger at every fathom's length. She came nearer, until she bestrode the summit of one tremendous billow, which rolled on with her unbroken, till the wave and its burden were precipitated against the rock, and then the triumph of the elements over the work of human hands was at once completed. One wave, we have said, made the wrecked vessel completely manifest in her whole bulk, as it raised her, and bore her onward against the face of the precipice. But when that wave receded from the foot of the rock, the ship had ceased to exist; and the retiring billow only bore back a quantity of beams, planks, casks, and similar objects, which swept out to the offing, to be brought in again by the next wave, and again precipitated upon the face of the rock.

It was at this moment that Mordaunt conceived he saw a man floating on a plank or water-cask, which, drifting away from the main current, seemed about to go ashore, upon a small spot of sand, where the water was shallow,

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and the waves broke more smoothly. To see the danger, and to exclaim, "He lives, and may yet be saved!" was the first impulse of the fearless Mordaunt. The next was, after one rapid glance at the front of the cliff, to precipitate himself—such seemed the rapidity of his movement—from the verge, and to commence, by means of slight fissures, projections, and crevices in the rock, a descent, which, to a spectator, appeared little else than an act of absolute insanity.

"Stop, I command you, rash boy!" said his father; "the attempt is death. Stop, and take the safer path to the left." But Mordaunt was already completely engaged in his perilous enterprise.

"Why should I prevent him?" said his father, checking his anxiety with the stern and unfeeling philosophy whose principles he had adopted. "Should he die now, full of generous and high feeling, eager in the cause of humanity, happy in the exertion of his own conscious activity and youthful strength—should he die now, will he not escape misanthropy, and remorse, and age, and the consciousness of decaying powers, both of body and mind?—I will not look upon it, however—I will not—I cannot behold this young light so suddenly quenched!"

He turned from the precipice accordingly, and hastening to the left for more than a quarter of a mile, he proceeded towards a *riva*, or cleft in the rock, containing a path, called Erick's Steps, neither safe, indeed, nor easy, but the only one by which the inhabitants of Jarlshof were wont, for any purpose, to seek access to the foot of the precipice.

But long ere Mertoun had reached even the upper end of the pass, his adventurous and active son had accom-

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plished his more desperate enterprise. He had been in vain turned aside from the direct line of descent, by the intervention of difficulties which he had not seen from above—his route became only more circuitous, but could not be interrupted. More than once, large fragments to which he was about to entrust his weight, gave way before him, and thundered down into the tormented ocean; and in one or two instances, such detached pieces of rock rushed after him, as if to bear him headlong in their course. A courageous heart, a steady eye, a tenacious hand, and a firm foot, carried him through his desperate attempt; and in the space of seven minutes, he stood at the bottom of the cliff, from the verge of which he had achieved his perilous descent.

The place which he now occupied was the small projecting spot of stones, sand, and gravel, that extended a little way into the sea, which on the right hand lashed the very bottom of the precipice, and on the left, was scarce divided from it by a small wave-worn portion of beach that extended as far as the foot of the rent in the rocks called Erick's Steps, by which Mordaunt's father proposed to descend.

When the vessel split and went to pieces, all was swallowed up in the ocean, which had, after the first shock, been seen to float upon the waves, excepting only a few pieces of wreck, casks, chests, and the like, which a strong eddy, formed by the reflux of the waves, had landed, or at least grounded, upon the shallow where Mordaunt now stood. Amongst these his eager eye discovered the object that had at first engaged his attention, and which now, seen at nigher distance, proved to be in truth a man, and in a most precarious state. His arms were still wrapt with a close and convulsive grasp

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round the plank to which he had clung in the moment of the shock, but sense and the power of motion were fled; and, from the situation in which the plank lay, partly grounded upon the beach, partly floating in the sea, there was every chance that it might be again washed off shore, in which case death was inevitable. Just as he had made himself aware of these circumstances, Mordaunt beheld a huge wave advancing, and hastened to interpose his aid ere it burst, aware that the reflux might probably sweep away the sufferer.

He rushed into the surf, and fastened on the body, with the same tenacity, though under a different impulse, with that wherewith the hound seizes his prey. The strength of the retiring wave proved even stronger than he had expected, and it was not without a struggle for his own life, as well as for that of the stranger, that Mordaunt resisted being swept off with the receding billow, when, though an adroit swimmer, the strength of the tide must either have dashed him against the rocks, or hurried him out to sea. He stood his ground, however, and ere another such billow had returned, he drew up, upon the small slip of dry sand, both the body of the stranger, and the plank to which he continued firmly attached. But how to save and to recall the means of ebbing life and strength, and how to remove into a place of greater safety the sufferer, who was incapable of giving any assistance towards his own preservation, were questions which Mordaunt asked himself eagerly, but in vain.

He looked to the summit of the cliff on which he had left his father, and shouted to him for his assistance; but his eye could not distinguish his form, and his voice was only answered by the scream of the sea-birds. He gazed again on the sufferer. A dress richly laced, according to

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the fashion of the times, fine linen, and rings upon his fingers, evinced he was a man of superior rank; and his features shewed youth and comeliness, notwithstanding they were pallid and disfigured. He still breathed, but so feebly, that his respiration was almost imperceptible, and life seemed to keep such slight hold of his frame, that there was every reason to fear it would become altogether extinguished, unless it were speedily reinforced. To loosen the handkerchief from his neck, to raise him with his face towards the breeze, to support him with his arms, was all that Mordaunt could do for his assistance, whilst he anxiously looked for some one who might lend his aid in dragging the unfortunate to a more safe situation.

At this moment he beheld a man advancing slowly and cautiously along the beach. He was in hopes, at first, it was his father, but instantly recollected that he had not had time to come round by the circuitous descent, to which he must necessarily have recourse, and besides, he saw that the man who approached him was shorter in stature.

As he came nearer, Mordaunt was at no loss to recognise the pedlar whom the day before he had met with at Harfra, and who was known to him before upon many occasions. He shouted as loud as he could, "Bryce, hollo! Bryce, come hither!" But the merchant, intent upon picking up some of the spoils of the wreck, and upon dragging them out of reach of the tide, paid for some time little attention to his shouts.

When he did at length approach Mordaunt, it was not to lend him his aid, but to remonstrate with him on his rashness in undertaking the charitable office. "Are you mad?" said he; "you that have lived sae lang in Zetland, to risk the saving of a drowning man? Wot ye

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not, if you bring him to life again, he will be sure to do you some capital injury? *—Come, Master Mordaunt, bear a hand to what's mair to the purpose. Help me to get ane or twa of these kists ashore before any body else comes, and we shall share, like good Christians, what God sends us, and be thankful."

Mordaunt was indeed no stranger to this inhuman superstition, current at a former period among the lower orders of the Zetlanders, and the more generally adopted, perhaps, that it served as an apology for refusing assistance to the unfortunate victims of shipwreck, while they made plunder of their goods. At any rate, the opinion, that to save a drowning man was to run the risk of future injury from him, formed a strange contradiction in the character of these islanders; who, hospitable, generous, and disinterested, on all other occasions, were sometimes, nevertheless, induced by this superstition, to refuse their

* It is remarkable, that in an archipelago, where so many persons must be necessarily endangered by the waves, so strange and inhuman a maxim should have ingrafted itself upon the minds of a people otherwise kind, moral, and hospitable. But all with whom I have spoken agree, that it was almost general in the beginning of the eighteenth century, and was with difficulty weeded out by the sedulous instructions of the clergy, and the rigorous injunctions of the proprietors. There is little doubt it had been originally introduced as an excuse for suffering those who attempted to escape from the wreck to perish unassisted, so that, there being no survivor, she might be considered as lawful plunder. A story was told me, I hope an untrue one, that a vessel having got ashore among the breakers on one of the remote Zetland islands, five or six men, the whole or greater part of the unfortunate crew, endeavoured to land by assistance of a hawser, which they had secured to a rock; the inhabitants were assembled, and looked on with some uncertainty, till an old man said, "Sirs, if these men come ashore, the additional mouths will eat all the meal we have in store for winter; and how are we to get more?" A young fellow, moved with this argument, struck the rope asunder with his axe, and all the poor wretches were immersed among the breakers, and perished.

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aid in those mortal emergencies, which were so common upon their rocky and stormy coasts. We are happy to add, that the exhortation and example of the proprietors have eradicated even the traces of this inhuman belief, of which there might be some observed within the memory of those now alive. It is strange that the minds of men should have ever been hardened towards those involved in a distress to which they themselves were so constantly exposed; but perhaps the frequent sight and consciousness of such danger tends to blunt the feelings to its consequences, whether affecting ourselves or others.

Bryce was remarkably tenacious of this ancient belief; the more so, perhaps, that the mounting of his pack depended less upon the warehouses of Lerwick or Kirkwall, than on the consequences of such a north-western gale as that of the day preceding; for which (being a man who, in his own way, professed great devotion) he seldom failed to express his grateful thanks to Heaven. It was indeed said of him, that if he had spent the same time in assisting the wrecked seamen, which he had employed in rifling their bales and boxes, he would have saved many lives, and lost much linen. He paid no sort of attention to the repeated entreaties of Mordaunt, although he was now upon the same slip of sand with him. It was well known to Bryce as a place on which the eddy was likely to land such spoils as the ocean disgorged; and to improve the favourable moment, he occupied himself exclusively in securing and appropriating whatever seemed most portable, and of greatest value. At length Mordaunt saw the honest pedlar fix his views upon a strong sea-chest, framed of some Indian wood, well secured by brass plates, and seeming to be of a

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foreign construction. The stout lock resisted all Bryce's efforts to open it, until, with great composure, he plucked from his pocket a very neat hammer and chisel, and began forcing the hinges.

Incensed beyond patience at his assurance, Mordaunt caught up a wooden stretcher which lay near him, and laying his charge softly on the sand, approached Bryce with a menacing gesture, and exclaimed, "You cold-blooded, inhuman rascal! either get up instantly and lend me your assistance to recover this man, and bear him out of danger from the surf, or I will not only beat you to a mummy on the spot, but inform Magnus Troil of your thievery, that he may have you flogged till your bones are bare, and then banish you from the mainland!"

The lid of the chest had just sprung open as this rough address saluted Bryce's ears, and the inside presented a tempting view of wearing apparel for sea and land; shirts, plain and with lace ruffles, a silver compass, a silver-hilted sword, and other valuable articles, which the pedlar well knew to be such as stir in the trade. He was half-disposed to start up, draw the sword, which was a cut-and-thrust, and "darraign battaile," as Spenser says, rather than quit his prize, or brook interruption. Being, though short, a stout square-made personage, and not much past the prime of life, having besides the better weapon, he might have given Mordaunt more trouble than his benevolent knight-errantry deserved.

Already, as with vehemence he repeated his injunctions that Bryce should forbear his plunder, and come to the assistance of the dying man, the pedlar retorted with a voice of defiance, "Dinna swear, sir; dinna swear, sir—I will endure no swearing in my presence; and if you lay a finger on me, that am taking the lawful spoil of the

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Egyptians, I will give ye a lesson ye shall remember from this day to Yule!"

Mordaunt would speedily have put the pedlar's courage to the test, but a voice behind him suddenly said, "Forbear!" It was the voice of Norna of the Fitfulhead, who, during the heat of their altercation, had approached them unobserved. "Forbear!" she repeated; "and, Bryce, do thou render Mordaunt the assistance he requires. It shall avail thee more, and it is I who say the word, than all that you could earn today besides."

"It is se'enteen hundred linen," said the pedlar, giving a tweak to one of the shirts, in that knowing manner with which matrons and judges ascertain the texture of the loom;—"it's se'enteen hundred linen, and as strong as an it were dowlas. Nevertheless, mother, your bidding is to be done; and I would have done Mr. Mordaunt's bidding, too," he added, relaxing from his note of defiance into the deferential whining tone with which he cajoled his customers, "if he hadna made use of profane oaths, which made my very flesh grew, and caused me, in some sort, to forget myself." He then took a flask from his pocket, and approached the shipwrecked man. "It's the best of brandy," he said; "and if that doesna cure him, I ken nought that will." So saying, he took a preliminary gulp himself, as if to show the quality of the liquor, and was about to put it to the man's mouth, when, suddenly withholding his hand, he looked at Norna—"You ensure me against all risk of evil from him, if I am to render him my help?—Ye ken yoursell what folk say, mother."

For all other answer, Norna took the bottle from the pedlar's hand, and began to chafe the temples and throat

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of the shipwrecked man; directing Mordaunt how to hold his head, so as to afford him the means of disgorging the sea-water which he had swallowed during his immersion. The pedlar looked on inactive for a moment, and then said, "To be sure, there is not the same risk in helping him, now he is out of the water, and lying high and dry on the beach; and, to be sure, the principal danger is to those that first touch him; and, to be sure, it is a world's pity to see how these rings are pinching the puir creature's swalled fingers—they make his hand as blue as a partan's back before boiling." So saying, he seized one of the man's cold hands, which had just, by a tremulous motion, indicated the return of life, and began his charitable work of removing the rings, which seemed to be of some value.

"As you love your life, forbear," said Norna, sternly, "or I will lay that on you which shall spoil your travels through the isles."

"Now, for mercy's sake, mother, say nae mair about it," said the pedlar, "and I'll e'en do your pleasure in your ain way! I *did* feel a rheumatize in my back-spauld yestreen; and it wad be a sair thing for the like of me to be debarred my quiet walk round the country, in the way of trade, making the honest penny, and helping myself with what Providence sends on our coasts."

"Peace, then," said the woman—"Peace, as thou wouldst not rue it; and take this man on thy broad shoulders. His life is of value, and you will be rewarded."

"I had muckle need," said the pedlar, pensively looking at the lidless chest, and the other matters which strewed the sand; "for he has comed between me and as muckle spreacherie as wad hae made a man of me for the

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rest of my life; and now it maun lie here till the next tide sweep it a' doun the Roost, after them that aught it yesterday morning."

"Fear not," said Norna, "it will come to man's use. See, there come carrion-crows, of scent as keen as thine own."

She spoke truly; for several of the people from the hamlet of Jarlshof were now hastening along the beach, to have their share in the spoil. The pedlar beheld them approach with a deep groan. "Ay, ay," he said, "the folk of Jarlshof, they will make clean wark; they are kend for that far and wide; they winna leave the value of a rotten ratlin; and what's waur, there isna ane o' them has mense or sense eneugh to give thanks for the mercies when they have gotten them. There is the auld Ranzelman, Neil Ronaldson, that canna walk a mile to hear the minister, but he will hirple ten if he hears of a ship embayed."

Norna, however, seemed to possess over him so complete an ascendency, that he no longer hesitated to take the man, who now gave strong symptoms of reviving existence, upon his shoulders; and, assisted by Mordaunt, trudged along the sea-beach with his burden, without farther remonstrance. Ere he was borne off, the stranger pointed to the chest, and attempted to mutter something, to which Norna replied, "Enough. It shall be secured."

Advancing towards the passage called Erick's Steps, by which they were to ascend the cliffs, they met the people from Jarlshof hastening in the opposite direction. Man and woman, as they passed, reverently made room for Norna, and saluted her—not without an expression of fear upon some of their faces. She passed them a few paces, and then turning back, called aloud to the Ranzel-

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man, who (though the practice was more common than legal) was attending the rest of the hamlet upon this plundering expedition. "Neil Ronaldson," she said, "mark my words. There stands yonder a chest, from which the lid has been just prized off. Look it be brought down to your own house at Jarlshof, just as it now is. Beware of moving or touching the slightest article. He were better in his grave, that so much as looks at the contents. I speak not for nought, nor in aught will I be disobeyed."

"Your pleasure shall be done, mother," said Ronaldson. "I warrant we will not break bulk, since sic is your bidding."

Far behind the rest of the villagers, followed an old woman, talking to herself, and cursing her own decrepitude, which kept her the last of the party, yet pressing forward with all her might to get her share of the spoil.

When they met her, Mordaunt was astonished to recognise his father's old housekeeper. "How now," he said, "Swertha, what make you so far from home?"

"Just e'en daikering out to look after my auld master and your honour," replied Swertha, who felt like a criminal caught in the manner; for on more occasions than one, Mr. Mertoun had intimated his high disapprobation of such excursions as she was at present engaged in.

But Mordaunt was too much engaged with his own thoughts to take much notice of her delinquency. "Have you seen my father?" he said.

"And that I have," replied Swertha—"The gude gentleman was ganging to hirsel himsell doun Erick's Steps, whilk would have been the ending of him, that is in no way a cragsman. Sae I e'en gat him wiled away

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hame—and I was just seeking you that you may gang after him to the hall-house, for, to my thought, he is far frae weel."

"My father unwell?" said Mordaunt, remembering the faintness he had exhibited at the commencement of that morning's walk.

"Far frae weel—far frae weel," groaned out Swertha, with a piteous shake of the head—"white o' the gills—white o' the gills—and him to think of coming down the riva!"

"Return home, Mordaunt," said Norna, who was listening to what had passed. "I will see all that is necessary done for this man's relief, and you will find him at the Ranzelman's, when you list to inquire. You cannot help him more than you already have done."

Mordaunt felt this was true, and, commanding Swertha to follow him instantly, betook himself to the path homeward.

Swertha hobbled reluctantly after her young master in the same direction, until she lost sight of him on his entering the cleft of the rock; then instantly turned about, muttering to herself, "Haste home, in good sooth?—haste home, and lose the best chance of getting a new rokelay and owerlay that I have had these ten years? by my certie, na—It's seldom sic rich godsends come on our shore—no since the Jenny and James came ashore in King Charlie's time."

So saying, she mended her pace as well as she could, and, a willing mind making amends for frail limbs, posted on with wonderful dispatch to put in for her share of the spoil. She soon reached the beach, where the Ranzelman, stuffing his own pouches all the while, was exhorting the rest to part things fair, and be neighbourly, and

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to give to the auld and helpless a share of what was going, which, he charitably remarked, would bring a blessing on the shore, and send them "mair wrecks ere winter." *

* The ancient Zetlander looked upon the sea as the provider of his living, not only by the plenty produced by the fishings, but by the spoil of wrecks. Some particular islands have fallen off very considerably in their rent, since the commissioners of the light-houses have ordered lights on the Isle of Sanda and the Pentland Skerries. A gentleman, familiar with those seas, expressed surprise at seeing the farmer of one of the isles in a boat with a very old pair of sails. "Had it been His will"—said the man, with an affected deference to Providence, very inconsistent with the sentiment of his speech—"Had it been *His* will that light had not been placed yonder, I would have had enough of new sails last winter."

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CHAPTER VIII.

He was a lovely youth, I guess;
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he.
And when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

WORDSWORTH.

THE light foot of Mordaunt Mertoun was not long of bearing him to Jarlshof. He entered the house hastily, for what he himself had observed that morning, corresponded in some degree with the ideas which Swertha's tale was calculated to excite. He found his father, however, in the inner apartment, reposing himself after his fatigue; and his first question satisfied him that the good dame had practised a little imposition to get rid of them both.

"Where is this dying man, whom you have so wisely ventured your own neck to relieve?" said the elder Mertoun to the younger.

"Norna, sir," replied Mordaunt, "has taken him under her charge; she understands such matters."

"And is quack as well as witch?" said the elder Mertoun. "With all my heart—it is a trouble saved. But I hasted home, on Swertha's hint, to look out for lint and bandages; for her speech was of broken bones."

Mordaunt kept silence, well knowing his father would

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not persevere in his inquiries upon such a matter, and not willing either to prejudice the old governante, or to excite his father to one of those excesses of passion into which he was apt to burst, when, contrary to his wont, he thought proper to correct the conduct of his domestic.

It was late in the day ere old Swertha returned from her expedition, heartily fatigued, and bearing with her a bundle of some bulk, containing, it would seem, her share of the spoil. Mordaunt instantly sought her out, to charge her with the deceits she had practised on both his father and himself; but the accused matron lacked not her reply.

"By her troth," she said, "she thought it was time to bid Mr. Mertoun gang hame and get bandages, when she had seen, with her ain twa een, Mordaunt ganging down the cliff like a wild-cat—it was to be thought broken bones would be the end, and lucky if bandages wad do any good;—and, by her troth, she might weel tell Mordaunt his father was puirly, and him looking sae white in the gills, (whilk, she wad die upon it, was the very word she used,) and it was a thing that couldna be denied by man at this very moment."

"But, Swertha," said Mordaunt, as soon as her clamorous defence gave him time to speak in reply, "how came you, that should have been busy with your housewifery and your spinning, to be out this morning at Erick's Steps, in order to take all this unnecessary care of my father and me?—And what is in that bundle, Swertha? for I fear Swertha, you have been transgressing the law, and have been out upon the wrecking system."

"Fair fa' your sonsy face, and the blessing of Saint Ronald upon you!" said Swertha, in a tone betwixt coaxing and jesting; "would you keep a puir body frae

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mending hersell, and sae muckle gear lying on the loose sand for the lifting?—Hout, Maister Mordaunt, a ship ashore is a sight to wile the minister out of his very pu'-pit in the middle of his preaching, muckle mair a puir auld ignorant wife frae her rock and her tow. And little did I get for my day's wark—just some rags o' cambric things, and a bit or twa of coorse claith, and sic like—the strong and the hearty get a' thing in this warld."

"Yes, Swertha," replied Mertoun, "and that is rather hard, as you must have your share of punishment in this world and the next, for robbing the poor mariners."

"Hout, callant, wha wad punish an auld wife like me for a wheen duds?—Folk speak muckle black ill of Earl Patrick; but he was a freend to the shore, and made wise laws against ony body helping vessels that were like to gang on the breakers.*—And the mariners, I have heard Bryce Jagger say, lose their right frae the time keel touches sand; and, moreover, they are dead and gane, poor souls—dead and gane, and care little about warld's wealth now—Nay, nae mair than the great Jarls and Sea-kings, in the Norse days, did about the treasures that they buried in the tombs and sepulchres auld langsyne. Did I ever tell you the sang, Maister Mordaunt, how Olaf Tryguarson garr'd hide five gold crouns in the same grave with him?"

"No, Swertha," said Mordaunt, who took pleasure in tormenting the cunning old plunderer—"You never told me that; but I tell you, that the stranger whom Norna has taken down to the town, will be well enough to-morrow, to ask where you have hidden the goods that you have stolen from the wreck."

"But wha will tell him a word about it, hinnie?" said

* This was literally true.

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Swertha, looking slyly up in her young master's face—"The mair by token, since I maun tell ye, that I have a bonny remnant of silk amang the lave, that will make a dainty waistcoat to yoursell, the first merry-making ye gang to."

Mordaunt could no longer forbear laughing at the cunning with which the old dame proposed to bribe off his evidence by imparting a portion of her plunder; and, desiring her to get ready what provision she had made for dinner, he returned to his father, whom he found still sitting in the same place, and nearly in the same posture, in which he had left him.

When their hasty and frugal meal was finished, Mordaunt announced to his father his purpose of going down to the town, or hamlet, to look after the shipwrecked sailor.

The elder Mertoun assented with a nod.

"He must be ill-accommodated there, sir," added his son—a hint which only produced another nod of assent. "He seemed, from his appearance," pursued Mordaunt, "to be of very good rank—and admitting these poor people do their best to receive him, in his present weak state, yet——"

"I know what you would say," said his father, interrupting him; "we, you think, ought to do something towards assisting him. Go to him, then—if he lacks money, let him name the sum, and he shall have it; but, for lodging the stranger here and holding intercourse with him, I neither can, nor will do so. I have retired to this farthest extremity of the British isles, to avoid new friends, and new faces, and none such shall intrude on me either their happiness or their misery. When you have known the world half a score of years longer, your early friends will have given you reason to remember them, and to avoid

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new ones for the rest of your life. Go then—why do you stop?—rid the country of the man—let me see no one about me but those vulgar countenances, the extent and character of whose petty knavery I know, and can submit to, as to an evil too trifling to cause irritation." He then threw his purse to his son, and signed to him to depart with all speed.

Mordaunt was not long before he reached the village. In the dark abode of Neil Rolandson, the Ranzelman, he found the stranger seated by the peat-fire, upon the very chest which had excited the cupidity of the devout Bryce Snailsfoot, the pedlar. The Ranzelman himself was absent, dividing, with all due impartiality, the spoils of the wrecked vessel amongst the natives of the community; listening to and redressing their complaints of inequality; and (if the matter in hand had not been, from beginning to end, utterly unjust and indefensible) discharging the part of a wise and prudent magistrate, in all the details. For at this time, and probably until a much later period, the lower orders of the islanders entertained an opinion, common to barbarians also in the same situation, that whatever was cast on their shores, became their indisputable property.

Margery Bimbister, the worthy spouse of the Ranzelman, was in the charge of the house, and introduced Mordaunt to her guest, saying, with no great ceremony, "This is the young tacksman—You will maybe tell him your name, though you will not tell it to us. If it had not been for his four quarters, it's but little you would have said to ony body, sae lang as life lasted."

The stranger arose, and shook Mordaunt by the hand, observing, he understood that he had been the means of saving his life and his chest. "The rest of the property,"

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he said, "is, I see, walking the plank; for they are as busy as the devil in a gale of wind."

"And what was the use of your seamanship, then," said Margery, "that you couldna keep off the Sumburgh-head? It would have been lang ere Sumburgh-head had come to you."

"Leave us for a moment, good Margery Bimbister," said Mordaunt; "I wish to have some private conversation with this gentleman."

"Gentleman!" said Margery, with an emphasis; "not but the man is well enough to look at," she added, again surveying him; "but I doubt if there is muckle of the gentleman about him."

Mordaunt looked at the stranger, and was of a different opinion. He was rather above the middle size, and formed handsomely as well as strongly. Mordaunt's intercourse with society was not extensive; but he thought his new acquaintance, to a bold sun-burnt handsome countenance, which seemed to have faced various climates, added the frank and open manners of a sailor. He answered cheerfully the inquiries which Mordaunt made after his health; and maintained that one night's rest would relieve him from all the effects of the disaster he had sustained. But he spoke with bitterness of the avarice and curiosity of the Ranzelman and his spouse.

"That chattering old woman," said the stranger, "has persecuted me the whole day for the name of the ship. I think she might be contented with the share she has had of it. I was the principal owner of the vessel that was lost yonder, and they have left me nothing but my wearing apparel. Is there no magistrate or justice of the peace, in this wild country, that would lend a hand to help one when he is among the breakers?"

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Mordaunt mentioned Magnus Troil, the principal proprietor, as well as the Fowd, or provincial judge, of the district, as the person from whom he was most likely to obtain redress; and regretted that his own youth, and his father's situation as a retired stranger, should put it out of their power to afford him the protection he required.

"Nay, for your part, you have done enough," said the sailor; "but if I had five out of the forty brave fellows that are fishes' food by this time, the devil a man would I ask to do me the right that I could do for myself!"

"Forty hands!" said Mordaunt; "you were well manned for the size of the ship."

"Not so well as we needed to be. We mounted ten guns, besides chasers; but our cruise on the main had thinned us of men, and lumbered us up with goods. Six of our guns were in ballast—Hands! if I had had enough of hands, we would never have miscarried so infernally. The people were knocked up with working the pumps, and so took to their boats, and left me with the vessel, to sink or swim. But the dogs had their pay, and I can afford to pardon them—The boats swamped in the current—all were lost—and here am I."

"You had come north about then, from the West Indies?" said Mordaunt.

"Ay, ay; the vessel was the Good Hope of Bristol, a letter of marque. She had fine luck down on the Spanish main, both with commerce and privateering, but the luck's ended with her now. My name is Clement Cleveland, captain, and part owner, as I said before—I am a Bristol man born—my father was well known on the Tollsell—old Clem Cleveland of the College-Green."

Mordaunt had no right to inquire farther, and yet it seemed to him as if his own mind was but half satisfied.

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There was an affectation of bluntness, a sort of defiance, in the manner of the stranger, for which circumstances afforded no occasion. Captain Cleveland had suffered injustice from the islanders, but from Mordaunt he had only received kindness and protection; yet he seemed as if he involved all the neighbourhood in the wrongs he complained of. Mordaunt looked down and was silent, doubting whether it would be better to take his leave, or to proceed farther in his offers of assistance. Cleveland seemed to guess at his thoughts, for he immediately added, in a conciliating manner,—"I am a plain man, Master Mertoun, for that I understand is your name; and I am a ruined man to boot, and that does not mend one's good manners. But you have done a kind and friendly part by me, and it may be I think as much of it as if I thanked you more. And so before I leave this place, I'll give you my fowlingpiece; she will put a hundred swan-shot through a Dutchman's cap at eighty paces—she will carry ball too—I have hit a wild bull within a hundred-and-fifty yards—but I have two pieces that are as good, or better, so you may keep this for my sake."

"That would be to take my share of the wreck," answered Mordaunt, laughing.

"No such matter," said Cleveland, undoing a case which contained several guns and pistols,—"you see I have saved my private arm-chest, as well as my clothes—that the tall old woman in the dark rigging managed for me. And, between ourselves, it is worth all I have lost; for," he added, lowering his voice, and looking round, "when I speak of being ruined in the hearing of these land-sharks, I do not mean ruined stock and block. No, here is something will do more than shoot sea-fowl." So saying, he pulled out a great ammunition-pouch, marked *Swan-shot,*

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and showed Mordaunt, hastily, that it was full of Spanish pistoles and Portagues, (as the broad Portugal pieces were then called.) "No, no," he added, with a smile, "I have ballast enough to trim the vessel again; and now, will you take the piece?"

"Since you are willing to give it me," said Mordaunt, laughing, "with all my heart. I was just going to ask you, in my father's name," he added, showing his purse, "whether you wanted any of that same ballast?"

"Thanks, but you see I am provided—take my old acquaintance, and may she serve you as well as she has served me; but you will never make so good a voyage with her. You can shoot, I suppose?"

"Tolerably well," said Mordaunt, admiring the piece, which was a beautiful Spanish-barrel gun, inlaid with gold, small in the bore, and of unusual length, such as is chiefly used for shooting sea-fowl, and for ball-practice.

"With slugs," continued the donor, "never gun shot closer; and with single ball, you may kill a seal two hundred yards at sea from the top of the highest peak of this iron-bound coast of yours. But I tell you again that the old rattler will never do you the service she has done me."

"I shall not use her so dexterously, perhaps," said Mordaunt.

"Umph!—perhaps not," replied Cleveland; "but that is not the question. What say you to shooting the man at the wheel, just as we run aboard of a Spaniard? So the Don was taken aback, and we laid him athwart the hawse, and carried her cutlass in hand; and worth the while she was—stout brigantine—El Santo Francisco—bound for Porto Bello, with gold and negroes. That little bit of lead was worth twenty thousand pistoles."

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"I have shot at no such game as yet," said Mordaunt.

"Well, all in good time; we cannot weigh till the tide makes. But you are a tight, handsome, active young man. What is to ail you to take a trip after some of this stuff?" laying his hand on the bag of gold.

"My father talks of my travelling soon," replied Mordaunt, who, born to hold men-of-wars-men in great respect, felt flattered by this invitation from one who appeared a thorough-bred seaman.

"I respect him for the thought," said the Captain; "and I will visit him before I weigh anchor. I have a consort off these islands, and be cursed to her. She'll find me out somewhere, though she parted company in the bit of a squall, unless she is gone to Davy Jones too. Well, she was better found than we, and not so deep loaded—she must have weathered it. We'll have a hammock slung for you aboard, and make a sailor and a man of you in the same trip."

"I should like it well enough," said Mordaunt, who eagerly longed to see more of the world than his lonely situation had hitherto permitted; "but then my father must decide."

"Your father? pooh!" said Captain Cleveland;—"but you are very right," he added, checking himself; "Gad, I have lived so long at sea, that I cannot think any body has a right to think except the captain and the master. But you are very right. I will go up to the old gentleman this instant, and speak to him myself. He lives in that handsome, modern-looking building, I suppose, that I see a quarter of a mile off?"

"In that old half-ruined house," said Mordaunt, "he does indeed live; but he will see no visitors."

"Then you must drive the point yourself, for I can't

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stay in this latitude. Since your father is no magistrate, I must go to see this same Magnus—how call you him?—who is not justice of peace, but something else that will do the turn as well. These fellows have got two or three things that I must and will have back—let them keep the rest and be d—d to them. Will you give me a letter to him, just by way of commission?"

"It is scarce needful," said Mordaunt. "It is enough that you are shipwrecked, and need his help;—but yet I may as well furnish you with a letter of introduction."

"There," said the sailor, producing a writing-case from his chest, "are your writing-tools.—Meantime, since bulk has been broken, I will nail down the hatches, and make sure of the cargo."

While Mordaunt, accordingly, was engaged in writing to Magnus Troil a letter, setting forth the circumstances in which Captain Cleveland had been thrown upon their coast, the Captain, having first selected and laid aside some wearing apparel and necessaries enough to fill a knapsack, took in hand hammer and nails, employed himself in securing the lid of his sea-chest, by fastening it down in a workman-like manner, and then added the corroborating security of a cord, twisted and knotted with nautical dexterity. "I leave this in your charge," he said, "all except this," showing the bag of gold, "and these," pointing to a cutlass and pistols, "which may prevent all further risk of my parting company with my Portagues."

"You will find no occasion for weapons in this country, Captain Cleveland," replied Mordaunt; "a child might travel with a purse of gold from Sumburgh-head to the Scaw of Unst, and no soul would injure him."

"And that's pretty boldly said, young gentleman, con-

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sidering what is going on without doors at this moment."

"Oh," replied Mordaunt, a little confused, "what comes on land with the tide, they reckon their lawful property. One would think they had studied under Sir Arthegal, who pronounces—

> 'For equal right in equal things doth stand,
> And what the mighty sea hath once possess'd,
> And plucked quite from all possessors' hands,
> Or else by wrecks that wretches have distress'd,
> He may dispose, by his resistless might,
> As things at random left, to whom he list.'"

"I shall think the better of plays and ballads as long as I live, for these very words," said Captain Cleveland; "and yet I have loved them well enough in my day. But this is good doctrine, and more men than one may trim their sails to such a breeze. What the sea sends is ours, that's sure enough. However, in case that your good folks should think the land as well as the sea may present them with waiffs and strays, I will make bold to take my cutlass and pistols.—Will you cause my chest to be secured in your own house till you hear from me, and use your influence to procure me a guide to show me the way, and to carry my kit?"

"Will you go by sea or land?" said Mordaunt, in reply.

"By sea!" exclaimed Cleveland. "What—in one of these cockleshells, and a cracked cockleshell to boot? No, no—land, land, unless I knew my crew, my vessel, and my voyage."

They parted accordingly, Captain Cleveland being supplied with a guide to conduct him to Burgh-Westra, and his chest being carefully removed to the mansion-house at Jarlshof.

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CHAPTER IX.

This is a gentle trader, and a prudent.
He's no Autolycus, to blear your eye,
With quips of worldly gauds and gamesomeness;
But seasons all his glittering merchandise
With wholesome doctrines suited to the use,
As men sauce goose with sage and rosemary.
OLD PLAY.

ON the subsequent morning, Mordaunt, in answer to his father's inquiries, began to give him some account of the shipwrecked mariner, whom he had rescued from the waves. But he had not proceeded far in recapitulating the particulars which Cleveland had communicated, when Mr. Mertoun's looks became disturbed—he arose hastily, and, after pacing twice or thrice across the room, he retired into the inner chamber to which he usually confined himself, while under the influence of his mental malady. In the evening he re-appeared, without any traces of his disorder; but it may be easily supposed that his son avoided recurring to the subject which had affected him.

Mordaunt Mertoun was thus left without assistance, to form at his leisure his own opinion respecting the new acquaintance which the sea had sent him; and upon the whole, he was himself surprised to find the result less favourable to the stranger than he could well account for. There seemed to Mordaunt to be a sort of repelling influence about the man. True, he was a handsome man, of

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a frank and prepossessing manner, but there was an assumption of superiority about him, which Mordaunt did not quite so much like. Although he was so keen a sportsman as to be delighted with his acquisition of the Spanish-barrelled gun, and accordingly mounted and dismounted it with great interest, paying the utmost attention to the most minute parts about the lock and ornaments, yet he was, upon the whole, inclined to have some scruples about the mode in which he had acquired it.

"I should not have accepted it," he thought; "perhaps Captain Cleveland might give it me as a sort of payment for the trifling service I did him; and yet it would have been churlish to refuse it in the way it was offered. I wish he had looked more like a man whom one would have chosen to be obliged to."

But a successful day's shooting reconciled him to his gun, and he became assured, like most young sportsmen in similar circumstances, that all other pieces were but pop-guns in comparison. But then, to be doomed to shoot gulls and seals, when there were Frenchmen and Spaniards to be come at—when there were ships to be boarded, and steersmen to be marked off, seemed but a dull and contemptible destiny. His father had mentioned his leaving these islands, and no other mode of occupation occurred to his inexperience, save that of the sea, with which he had been conversant from his infancy. His ambition had formerly aimed no higher than at sharing the fatigues and dangers of a Greenland fishing expedition; for it was in that scene that the Zetlanders laid most of their perilous adventures. But war was again raging, the history of Sir Francis Drake, Captain Morgan, and other bold adventurers, an account of whose exploits he had purchased from Bryce Snailsfoot, had made much impres-

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sion on his mind, and the offer of Captain Cleveland to take him to sea, frequently recurred to him, although the pleasure of such a project was somewhat damped by a doubt, whether, in the long run, he should not find many objections to his proposed commander. Thus much he already saw, that he was opinionative, and might probably prove arbitrary; and that, since even his kindness was mingled with an assumption of superiority, his occasional displeasure might contain a great deal more of that disagreeable ingredient than could be palatable to those who sailed under him. And yet, after counting all risks, could his father's consent but be obtained, with what pleasure, he thought, would he embark in quest of new scenes and strange adventures, in which he proposed to himself to achieve such deeds as should be the theme of many a tale to the lovely sisters of Burgh-Westra—tales at which Minna should weep and Brenda should smile, and both should marvel! And this was to be the reward of his labours and his dangers; for the hearth of Magnus Troil had a magnetic influence over his thoughts, and however they might traverse amid his day-dreams, it was the point where they finally settled.

There were times when Mordaunt thought of mentioning to his father the conversation he had held with Captain Cleveland, and the seaman's proposal to him; but the very short and general account which he had given of that person's history, upon the morning after his departure from the hamlet, had produced a sinister effect on Mr. Mertoun's mind, and discouraged him from speaking farther on any subject connected with it. It would be time enough, he thought, to mention Captain Cleveland's proposal, when his consort should arrive, and when he should repeat his offer in a more formal

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manner; and these he supposed events likely very soon to happen.

But days grew to weeks, and weeks were numbered into months, and he heard nothing from Cleveland; and only learned, by an occasional visit from Bryce Snailsfoot, that the Captain was residing at Burgh-Westra, as one of the family. Mordaunt was somewhat surprised at this, although the unlimited hospitality of the islands, which Magnus Troil, both from fortune and disposition, carried to the utmost extent, made it almost a matter of course that he should remain in the family until he disposed of himself otherwise. Still, it seemed strange he had not gone to some of the northern isles to inquire after his consort; or that he did not rather choose to make Lerwick his residence, where fishing vessels often brought news from the coasts and ports of Scotland and Holland. Again, why did he not send for the chest he had deposited at Jarlshof? and still farther, Mordaunt thought it would have been but polite if the stranger had sent him some sort of message in token of remembrance.

These subjects of reflection were connected with another still more unpleasant, and more difficult to account for. Until the arrival of this person, scarce a week had passed without bringing him some kind greeting, or token of recollection, from Burgh-Westra; and pretences were scarce ever wanting for maintaining a constant intercourse. Minna wanted the words of a Norse ballad; or desired to have, for her various collections, feathers, or eggs, or shells, or specimens of the rarer seaweeds; or Brenda sent a riddle to be resolved, or a song to be learned; or the honest old Udaller,—in a rude manuscript, which might have passed for an ancient Runic inscription,—sent his hearty greetings to his good

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young friend, with a present of something to make good cheer, and an earnest request he would come to Burgh-Westra as soon, and stay there as long, as possible. These kindly tokens of remembrance were often sent by special message; besides which, there was never a passenger or a traveller, who crossed from the one mansion to the other, who did not bring to Mordaunt some friendly greeting from the Udaller and his family. Of late, this intercourse had become more and more infrequent; and no messenger from Burgh-Westra had visited Jarlshof for several weeks. Mordaunt both observed and felt this alteration, and it dwelt on his mind, while he questioned Bryce as closely as pride and prudence would permit, to ascertain, if possible, the cause of the change. Yet he endeavoured to assume an indifferent air while he asked the jagger whether there were no news in the country.

"Great news," the jagger replied; "and a gay mony of them. That crackbrained carle, the new factor, is for making a change in the *bismars* and the *lispunds*;* and our worthy Fowd, Magnus Troil, has sworn, that, sooner than change them for the still-yard, or aught else, he'll fling Factor Yellowley from Brassa-craig."

"Is that all?" said Mordaunt, very little interested.

"All? and eneugh, I think," replied the pedlar. "How are folks to buy and sell, if the weights are changed on them?"

"Very true," replied Mordaunt; "but have you heard of no strange vessels on the coast?"

"Six Dutch doggers off Brassa; and, as I hear, a high-quartered galliot thing, with a gaff mainsail, lying in Scalloway Bay. She will be from Norway."

"No ships of war, or sloops?"

* These are weights of Norwegian origin, still used in Zetland.

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"None," replied the pedlar, "since the Kite Tender sailed with the impress men. If it was His will, and our men were out of her, I wish the deep sea had her!"

"Were there no news at Burgh-Westra?—Were the family all well?"

"A' weel, and weel to do—out-taken, it may be, something ower muckle daffing and laughing—dancing ilk night, they say, wi' the stranger captain that's living there—him that was ashore on Sumburgh-head the tother day,—less daffing served him then."

"Daffing! dancing every night!" said Mordaunt, not particularly well satisfied—"Whom does Captain Cleveland dance with?"

"Ony body he likes, I fancy," said the jagger; "at ony rate, he gars a' body yonder dance after his fiddle. But I ken little about it, for I am no free in conscience to look upon thae flinging fancies. Folk should mind that life is made but of rotten yarn."

"I fancy that it is to keep them in mind of that wholesome truth, that you deal in such tender wares, Bryce," replied Mordaunt, dissatisfied as well with the tenor of the reply, as with the affected scruples of the respondent.

"That's as muckle as to say, that I suld hae minded you was a flinger and a fiddler yoursell, Maister Mordaunt; but I am an auld man, and maun unburden my conscience. But ye will be for the dance, I sall warrant, that's to be at Burgh-Westra, on John's Even, (*Saunt* John's as the blinded creatures ca' him,) and nae doubt ye will be for some worldly braws—hose, waistcoats, or sic like? I hae pieces frae Flanders"—With that he placed his moveable warehouse on the table, and began to unlock it.

"Dance!" repeated Mordaunt—"Dance on Saint

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John's Even?—Were you desired to bid me to it, Bryce?"

"Na—But ye ken weel eneugh ye wad be welcome, bidden, or no bidden. This captain—how-ca'-ye-him—is to be skudler, as they ca't—the first of the gang, like."

"The devil take him!" said Mordaunt, in impatient surprise.

"A' in gude time," replied the jagger; "hurry no man's cattle—the devil will hae his due, I warrant ye, or it winna be for lack of seeking. But it's true I'm telling you, for a' ye stare like a wildcat; and this same Captain,—I wat-na-his-name—bought ane of the very waistcoats that I am ganging to show ye—purple, wi' a gowd binding, and bonnily broidered; and I have a piece for you, the neighbour of it, wi' a green grund; and if ye mean to streek yoursell up beside him, ye maun e'en buy it, for it's gowd that glances in the lasses een now-a-days. See—look till't," he added, displaying the pattern in various points of view; "look till *it* through the light, and till the light through *it—wi'* the grain, and *against* the grain—it shows ony gate—cam frae Antwerp a' the gate—four dollars is the price;—and yon captain was sae weel pleased that he flang down a twenty shilling Jacobus, and bade me keep the change and be d—d!—poor silly profane creature, I pity him."

Without inquiring whether the pedlar bestowed his compassion on the worldly imprudence or the religious deficiencies of Captain Cleveland, Mordaunt turned from him, folded his arms, and paced the apartment, muttering to himself, "Not asked—A stranger to be king of the feast!"—Words which he repeated so earnestly, that Bryce caught a part of their import.

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"As for asking, I am almaist bauld to say, that ye will be asked, Maister Mordaunt."

"Did they mention my name, then?" said Mordaunt.

"I canna preceesely say that," said Bryce Snailsfoot; "but ye needna turn away your head sae sourly, like a sealgh when he leaves the shore; for, do you see, I heard distinctly that a' the revellers about are to be there; and is't to be thought they would leave out you, an auld kend freend, and the lightest foot at sic frolics, (Heaven send you a better praise in His ain gude time!) that ever flang at a fiddle-squeak, between this and Unst? Sae I consider ye altogether the same as invited—and ye had best provide yourself wi' a waistcoat, for brave and brisk will every man be that's there—the Lord pity them!"

He thus continued to follow with his green glazen eyes the motions of young Mordaunt Mertoun, who was pacing the room in a very pensive manner, which the jagger probably misinterpreted, as he thought, like Claudio, that if a man is sad, it must needs be because he lacks money. Bryce, therefore, after another pause, thus accosted him. "Ye needna be sad about the matter, Maister Mordaunt; for although I got the just price of the article from the captain-man, yet I maun deal freendly wi' you, as a kend freend and customer, and bring the price, as they say, within your purse-mouth—or it's the same to me to let it lie ower till Martinmas, or e'en to Candlemas. I am decent in the warld, Maister Mordaunt—forbid that I should hurry ony body, far mair a freend that has paid me siller afore now. Or I wad be content to swap the garment for the value in feathers or sea-otters' skins, or ony kind of peltrie—nane kens better than yoursell how to come by sic ware—and I am sure I hae furnished

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you wi' the primest o' powder. I dinna ken if I tell'd ye it was out o' the kist of Captain Plunket, that perished on the Scaw of Unst, wi' the armed brig Mary, sax years syne. He was a prime fowler himself, and luck it was that the kist came ashore dry. I sell that to nane but gude marksmen. And so, I was saying, if ye had ony wares ye liked to coup * for the waistcoat, I wad be ready to trock wi' you, for assuredly ye will be wanted at Burgh-Westra, on Saint John's Even; and ye wadna like to look waur than the Captain—that wadna be setting."

"I will be there, at least, whether wanted or not," said Mordaunt, stopping short in his walk, and taking the waistcoat-piece hastily out of the pedlar's hand; "and, as you say, will not disgrace them."

"Haud a care—haud a care, Maister Mordaunt," exclaimed the pedlar; "ye handle it as it were a bale of coarse wadmaal—ye'll fray't to bits—ye might weel say my ware is tender—and ye'll mind the price is four dollars—Sall I put ye in my book for it?"

"No," said Mordaunt, hastily; and, taking out his purse, he flung down the money.

"Grace to ye to wear the garment," said the joyous pedlar, "and to me to guide the siller; and protect us from earthly vanities and earthly covetousness; and send you the white linen raiment, whilk is mair to be desired than the muslins, and cambrics, and lawns, and silks of this world; and send me the talents which avail more than much fine Spanish gold, or Dutch dollars either—and—but God guide the callant, what for is he wrapping the silk up that gate, like a wisp of hay?"

At this moment, old Swertha, the housekeeper, entered,

* Barter.

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to whom, as if eager to get rid of the subject, Mordaunt threw his purchase, with something like careless disdain; and, telling her to put it aside, snatched his gun, which stood in the corner, threw his shooting accoutrements about him, and, without noticing Bryce's attempt to enter into conversation upon the "braw sealskin, as saft as doe-leather," which made the sling and cover of his fowlingpiece, he left the apartment abruptly.

The jagger, with those green, goggling, and gain-descrying kind of optics, which we have already described, continued gazing for an instant after the customer, who treated his wares with such irreverence.

Swertha also looked after him with some surprise. "The callant's in a creel," quoth she.

"In a creel!" echoed the pedlar; "he will be as wowf as ever his father was. To guide in that gate a bargain that cost him four dollars!—very, very Fifish, as the east-country fisherfolk say."

"Four dollars for that green rag!" said Swertha, catching at the words which the jagger had unwarily suffered to escape—"that was a bargain indeed! I wonder whether he is the greater fule, or you the mair rogue, Bryce Snailsfoot."

"I didna say it cost him preceesely four dollars," said Snailsfoot; "but if it had, the lad's siller's his ain, I hope; and he is auld eneugh to make his ain bargains. Mair by token the gudes are weel worth the money, and mair."

"Mair by token," said Swertha, coolly, "I will see what his father thinks about it."

"Ye'll no be sae ill-natured, Mistress Swertha," said the jagger; "that will be but cauld thanks for the bonny owerlay that I hae brought you a' the way frae Lerwick."

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"And a bonny price ye'll be setting on't," said Swertha; "for that's the gate your good deeds end."

"Ye sall hae the fixing of the price yoursell, or it may lie ower till ye're buying something for the house, or for your master, and it can make a' ae count."

"Troth and that's true, Bryce Snailsfoot, I am thinking we'll want some napery sune—for it's no to be thought we can spin, and the like, as if there was a mistress in the house; and sae we make nane at hame."

"And that's what I ca' walking by the word," said the jagger. "'Go unto those that buy and sell;' there's muckle profit in that text."

"There's a pleasure in dealing wi' a discreet man, that can make profit of onything," said Swertha; "and now that I take another look at that daft callant's waistcoat-piece, I think it *is* honestly worth four dollars."

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CHAPTER X.

I have possessed the regulation of the weather and the distribution of the seasons. The sun has listened to my dictates, and passed from tropic to tropic by my direction; the clouds, at my command, have poured forth their waters.

RASSELAS.

ANY sudden cause for anxious and mortifying reflection, which, in advanced age, occasion sullen and pensive inactivity, stimulates youth to eager and active exertion; as if, like the hurt deer, they endeavoured to drown the pain of the shaft by the rapidity of motion. When Mordaunt caught up his gun and rushed out of the house of Jarlshof, he walked on with great activity, over waste and wild, without any determined purpose, except that of escaping, if possible, from the smart of his own irritation. His pride was effectually mortified by the report of the jagger, which coincided exactly with some doubts he had been led to entertain, by the long and unkind silence of his friends at Burgh-Westra.

If the fortunes of Cæsar had doomed him, as the poet suggests, to have been

"But the best wrestler on the green,"

it is nevertheless to be presumed, that a foil from a rival, in that rustic exercise, would have mortified him as much as a defeat from a competitor, when he was struggling for the empery of the world. And even so Mordaunt

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Mertoun, degraded in his own eyes from the height which he had occupied as the chief amongst the youth of the island, felt vexed and irritated, as well as humbled. The two beautiful sisters, also, whose smiles all were so desirous of acquiring, with whom he had lived on terms of such familiar affection, that, with the same ease and innocence, there was unconsciously mixed a shade of deeper though undefined tenderness than characterizes fraternal love,—they also seemed to have forgotten him. He could not be ignorant, that, in the universal opinion of all Dunrossness, nay, of the whole Mainland, he might have had every chance of being the favoured lover of either; and now at once, and without any failure on his part, he was become so little to them, that he had lost even the consequence of an ordinary acquaintance. The old Udaller, too, whose hearty and sincere character should have made him more constant in his friendships, seemed to have been as fickle as his daughters, and poor Mordaunt had at once lost the smiles of the fair, and the favour of the powerful. These were uncomfortable reflections, and he doubled his pace, that he might outstrip them if possible.

Without exactly reflecting upon the route which he pursued, Mordaunt walked briskly on through a country where neither hedge, wall, nor enclosure of any kind, interrupts the steps of the wanderer, until he reached a very solitary spot, where, embosomed among steep heathy hills, which sunk suddenly down on the verge of the water, lay one of those small fresh-water lakes which are common in the Zetland isles, whose outlets form the sources of the small brooks and rivulets by which the country is watered, and serve to drive the little mills which manufacture their grain.

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It was a mild summer day; the beams of the sun, as is not uncommon in Zetland, were moderated and shaded by a silvery haze, which filled the atmosphere, and, destroying the strong contrast of light and shade, gave even to noon the sober livery of the evening twilight. The little lake, not three-quarters of a mile in circuit, lay in profound quiet; its surface undimpled, save when one of the numerous water-fowl, which glided on its surface, dived for an instant under it. The depth of the water gave the whole that cerulean tint of bluish green, which occasioned its being called the Green Loch; and at present, it formed so perfect a mirror to the bleak hills by which it was surrounded, and which lay reflected on its bosom, that it was difficult to distinguish the water from the land; nay, in the shadowy uncertainty occasioned by the thin haze, a stranger could scarce have been sensible that a sheet of water lay before him. A scene of more complete solitude, having all its peculiarities heightened by the extreme serenity of the weather, the quiet gray composed tone of the atmosphere, and the perfect silence of the elements, could hardly be imagined. The very aquatic birds, who frequented the spot in great numbers, forbore their usual flight and screams, and floated in profound tranquillity upon the silent water.

Without taking any determined aim—without having any determined purpose—almost without thinking what he was about, Mordaunt presented his fowlingpiece, and fired across the lake. The large swan-shot dimpled its surface like a partial shower of hail—the hills took up the noise of the report, and repeated it again, and again, and again, to all their echoes; the water-fowl took to wing in eddying and confused wheel, answering the echoes with a thousand varying screams, from the deep

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note of the swabie, or swartback, to the querulous cry of the tirracke and kittiewake.

Mordaunt looked for a moment on the clamorous crowd with a feeling of resentment, which he felt disposed at the moment to apply to all nature, and all her objects, animate or inanimate, however little concerned with the cause of his internal mortification.

"Ay, ay," he said, "wheel, dive, scream, and clamour as you will, and all because you have seen a strange sight, and heard an unusual sound. There is many a one like you in this round world. But you, at least, shall learn," he added, as he reloaded his gun, "that strange sights and strange sounds, ay, and strange acquaintances to boot, have sometimes a little shade of danger connected with them—But why should I wreak my own vexation on these harmless sea-gulls?" he subjoined, after a moment's pause; "they have nothing to do with the friends that have forgotten me.—I loved them all so well,—and to be so soon given up for the first stranger whom chance threw on the coast!"

As he stood resting upon his gun, and abandoning his mind to the course of these unpleasant reflections, his meditations were unexpectedly interrupted by some one touching his shoulder. He looked around, and saw Norna of the Fitful-head, wrapped in her dark and ample mantle. She had seen him from the brow of the hill, and had descended to the lake, through a small ravine which concealed her, until she came with noiseless step so close to him that he turned round at her touch.

Mordaunt Mertoun was by nature neither timorous nor credulous, and a course of reading more extensive than usual had, in some degree, fortified his mind against the attacks of superstition; but he would have been an

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actual prodigy, if, living in Zetland in the end of the seventeenth century, he had possessed the philosophy which did not exist in Scotland generally, until at least two generations later. He doubted in his own mind the extent, nay, the very existence, of Norna's supernatural attributes, which was a high flight of incredulity in the country where they were universally received; but still his incredulity went no farther than doubts. She was unquestionably an extraordinary woman, gifted with an energy above others, acting upon motives peculiar to herself, and apparently independent of mere earthly considerations. Impressed with these ideas, which he had imbibed from his youth, it was not without something like alarm, that he beheld this mysterious female standing on a sudden so close beside him, and looking upon him with such sad and severe eyes, as those with which the Fatal Virgins, who, according to northern mythology, were called the *Valkyriur*, or "Choosers of the Slain," were supposed to regard the young champions whom they selected to share the banquet of Odin.

It was, indeed, reckoned unlucky, to say the least, to meet with Norna suddenly alone, and in a place remote from witnesses; and she was supposed, on such occasions, to have been usually a prophetess of evil, as well as an omen of misfortune, to those who had such a rencontre. There were few or none of the islanders, however familiarized with her occasional appearance in society, that would not have trembled to meet her on the solitary banks of the Green Loch.

"I bring you no evil, Mordaunt Mertoun," she said, reading perhaps something of this superstitious feeling in the looks of the young man. "Evil from me you never felt, and never will."

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"Nor do I fear any," said Mordaunt, exerting himself to throw aside an apprehension which he felt to be unmanly. "Why should I, mother? You have been ever my friend."

"Yet, Mordaunt, thou art not of our region; but to none of Zetland blood, no, not even to those who sit around the hearth-stone of Magnus Troil, the noble descendants of the ancient Jarls of Orkney, am I more a well-wisher, than I am to thee, thou kind and brave-hearted boy. When I hung around thy neck that gifted chain, which all in our isles know was wrought by no earthly artist, but by the Drows,* in the secret recesses of their caverns, thou wert then but fifteen years old; yet thy foot had been on the Maiden-skerrie of Northmaven, known before but to the webbed sole of the swartback, and thy skiff had been in the deepest cavern of Brinnastir, where the *haaf-fish* † had before slumbered in dark obscurity. Therefore I gave thee that noble gift; and well thou knowest, that since that day, every eye in these isles has looked on thee as a son, or as a brother, endowed beyond other youths, and the favoured of those whose hour of power is when the night meets with the day."

* The Drows, or Trows, the legitimate successors of the northern *duergar*, and somewhat allied to the fairies, reside, like them, in the interior of green hills and caverns, and are most powerful at midnight. They are curious artificers in iron, as well as in the precious metals, and are sometimes propitious to mortals, but more frequently capricious and malevolent. Among the common people of Zetland, their existence still forms an article of universal belief. In the neighbouring isles of Feroe, they are called Foddenskencand, or subterranean people; and Lucas Jacobson Debes, well acquainted with their nature, assures us that they inhabit those places which are polluted with the effusion of blood, or the practice of any crying sin. They have a government, which seems to be monarchical.

† The larger seal, or sea-calf, which seeks the most solitary recesses for its abode. See Dr. EDMONSTONE'S *Zetland*, vol. ii. p. 294.

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"Alas! mother," said Mordaunt, "your kind gift may have given me favour, but it has not been able to keep it for me, or I have not been able to keep it for myself.—What matters it? I shall learn to set as little by others as they do by me. My father says that I shall soon leave these islands, and therefore, Mother Norna, I will return to you your fairy gift, that it may bring more lasting luck to some other than it has done to me."

"Despise not the gift of the nameless race," said Norna, frowning; then suddenly changing her tone of displeasure to that of mournful solemnity, she added,—"Despise them not, but, O Mordaunt, court them not! Sit down on that gray stone—thou art the son of my adoption, and I will doff, as far as I may, those attributes that sever me from the common mass of humanity, and speak with you as a parent with a child."

There was a tremulous tone of grief which mingled with the loftiness of her language and carriage, and was calculated to excite sympathy, as well as to attract attention. Mordaunt sat down on the rock which she pointed out, a fragment which, with many others that lay scattered around, had been torn by some winter storm from the precipice at the foot of which it lay, upon the very verge of the water. Norna took her own seat on a stone at about three feet distance, adjusted her mantle so that little more than her forehead, her eyes, and a single lock of her gray hair, were seen from beneath the shade of her dark wadmaal cloak, and then proceeded in a tone in which the imaginary consequence and importance so often assumed by lunacy, seemed to contend against the deep workings of some extraordinary and deeply-rooted mental affliction.

"I was not always," she said, "that which I now am.

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I was not always the wise, the powerful, the commanding, before whom the young stand abashed, and the old uncover their gray heads. There was a time when my appearance did not silence mirth, when I sympathized with human passion, and had my own share in human joy or sorrow. It was a time of helplessness—it was a time of folly—it was a time of idle and unfruitful laughter—it was a time of causeless and senseless tears;—and yet, with its follies, and its sorrows, and its weaknesses, what would Norna of Fitful-head give to be again the unmarked and happy maiden that she was in her early days! Hear me, Mordaunt, and bear with me; for you hear me utter complaints which have never sounded in mortal ears, and which in mortal ears shall never sound again. I will be what I ought," she continued, starting up and extending her lean and withered arm, "the queen and protectress of these wild and neglected isles,—I will be her whose foot the wave wets not, save by her permission; ay, even though its rage be at its wildest madness —whose robe the whirlwind respects, when it rends the house-rigging from the roof-tree. Bear me witness, Mordaunt Mertoun,—you heard my words at Harfra—you saw the tempest sink before them—Speak, bear me witness!"

To have contradicted her in this strain of high-toned enthusiasm, would have been cruel and unavailing, even had Mordaunt been more decidedly convinced than he was, that an insane woman, not one of supernatural power, stood before him.

"I heard you sing," he replied, "and I saw the tempest abate.

"Abate!" exclaimed Norna, striking the ground impatiently with her staff of black oak; "thou speakest it

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but half—it sunk at once—sunk in shorter space than the child that is hushed to silence by the nurse.—Enough, you know my power—but you know not—mortal man knows not, and never shall know, the price which I paid to attain it. No, Mordaunt, never for the widest sway that the ancient Norsemen boasted, when their banners waved victorious from Bergen to Palestine—never, for all that the round world contains, do thou barter thy peace of mind for such greatness as Norna's." She resumed her seat upon the rock, drew the mantle over her face, rested her head upon her hands, and by the convulsive motion which agitated her bosom, appeared to be weeping bitterly.

"Good Norna," said Mordaunt, and paused, scarce knowing what to say that might console the unhappy woman—"Good Norna," he again resumed, "if there be aught in your mind that troubles it, were you not best to go to the worthy minister at Dunrossness? Men say you have not for many years been in a Christian congregation—that cannot be well, or right. You are yourself well known as a healer of bodily disease; but when the mind is sick, we should draw to the Physician of our souls."

Norna had raised her person slowly from the stooping posture in which she sat; but at length she started up on her feet, threw back her mantle, extended her arm, and while her lip foamed, and her eye sparkled, exclaimed in a tone resembling a scream,—"Me did you speak—me did you bid seek out a priest!—Would you kill the good man with horror?—Me in a Christian congregation!—Would you have the roof to fall on the sackless assembly, and mingle their blood with their worship? I—I seek to the good Physician!—Would you have the fiend claim his prey openly before God and man?"

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The extreme agitation of the unhappy speaker naturally led Mordaunt to the conclusion, which was generally adopted and accredited in that superstitious country and period. "Wretched woman," he said, "if indeed thou hast leagued thyself with the Powers of Evil, why should you not seek even yet for repentance? But do as thou wilt, I cannot, dare not, as a Christian, abide longer with you; and take again your gift," he said, offering back the chain, "good can never come of it, if indeed evil hath not come already."

"Be still and hear me, thou foolish boy," said Norna, calmly, as if she had been restored to reason by the alarm and horror which she perceived in Mordaunt's countenance; "hear me, I say. I am not of those who have leagued themselves with the Enemy of Mankind, or derive skill or power from his ministry. And although the unearthly powers *were* propitiated by a sacrifice which human tongue can never utter, yet, God knows, my guilt in that offering was no more than that of the blind man who falls from the precipice which he could neither see nor shun. Oh, leave me not—shun me not—in this hour of weakness! Remain with me till the temptation be passed, or I will plunge myself into that lake, and rid myself at once of my power and my wretchedness!"

Mordaunt, who had always looked up to this singular woman with a sort of affection, occasioned no doubt by the early kindness and distinction which she had shown to him, was readily induced to reassume his seat, and listen to what she had farther to say, in hopes that she would gradually overcome the violence of her agitation. It was not long ere she seemed to have gained the victory her companion expected, for she addressed him in her usual steady and authoritative manner.

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"It was not of myself, Mordaunt, that I purposed to speak, when I beheld you from the summit of yonder gray rock, and came down the path to meet with you. My fortunes are fixed beyond change, be it for weal or for woe. For myself I have ceased to feel much; but for those whom she loves, Norna of the Fitful-head has still those feelings which link her to her kind. Mark me. There is an eagle, the noblest that builds in these airy precipices, and into that eagle's nest there has crept an adder—wilt thou lend thy aid to crush the reptile, and to save the noble brood of the lord of the north sky?"

"You must speak more plainly, Norna," said Mordaunt, "if you would have me understand or answer you. I am no guesser of riddles."

"In plain language, then, you know well the family of Burgh-Westra—the lovely daughters of the generous old Udaller, Magnus Troil,—Minna and Brenda, I mean? You know them, and you love them?"

"I have known them, mother," replied Mordaunt, "and I have loved them—none knows it better than yourself."

"To know them once," said Norna, emphatically, "is to know them always. To love them once, is to love them for ever."

"To have loved them once, is to wish them well for ever," replied the youth; "but it is nothing more. To be plain with you, Norna, the family at Burgh-Westra have of late totally neglected me. But show me the means of serving them, I will convince you how much I have remembered old kindness, how little I resent late coldness."

"It is well spoken, and I will put your purpose to the proof," replied Norna. "Magnus Troil has taken a ser-

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pent into his bosom—his lovely daughters are delivered up to the machinations of a villain."

"You mean the stranger, Cleveland?" said Mordaunt.

"The stranger who so calls himself," replied Norna—"the same whom we found flung ashore, like a waste heap of sea-weed, at the foot of the Sumburgh-cape. I felt that within me, that would have prompted me to let him lie till the tide floated him off, as it had floated him on shore. I repent me I gave not way to it."

"But," said Mordaunt, "I cannot repent that I did my duty as a Christian man. And what right have I to wish otherwise? If Minna, Brenda, Magnus, and the rest, like that stranger better than me, I have no title to be offended; nay, I might well be laughed at for bringing myself into comparison."

"It is well, and I trust they merit thy unselfish friendship."

"But I cannot perceive," said Mordaunt, "in what you can propose that I should serve them. I have but just learned by Bryce the jagger, that this Captain Cleveland is all in all with the ladies at Burgh-Westra, and with the Udaller himself. I would like ill to intrude myself where I am not welcome, or to place my home-bred merit in comparison with Captain Cleveland's. He can tell them of battles, when I can only speak of bird's nests—can speak of shooting Frenchmen, when I can only tell of shooting seals—he wears gay clothes, and bears a brave countenance; I am plainly dressed, and plainly nurtured. Such gay gallants as he can noose the hearts of those he lives with, as the fowler nooses the guillemot with his rod and line."

"You do wrong to yourself," replied Norna, "wrong

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to yourself, and greater wrong to Minna and Brenda. And trust not the reports of Bryce—he is like the greedy chaffer-whale, that will change his course and dive for the most petty coin which a fisher can cast at him. Certain it is, that if you have been lessened in the opinion of Magnus Troil, that sordid fellow hath had some share in it. But let him count his vantage, for my eye is upon him."

"And why, mother," said Mordaunt, "do you not tell to Magnus what you have told to me?"

"Because," replied Norna, "they who wax wise in their own conceit must be taught a bitter lesson by experience. It was but yesterday that I spoke with Magnus, and what was his reply?—'Good Norna, you grow old.' And this was spoken by one bounden to me by so many and such close ties—by the descendant of the ancient Norse earls—this was from Magnus Troil to me; and it was said in behalf of one, whom the sea flung forth as wreck-weed! Since he despises the counsel of the aged, he shall be taught by that of the young; and well that he is not left to his own folly. Go, therefore, to Burgh-Westra, as usual, upon the Baptist's festival."

"I have had no invitation," said Mordaunt; "I am not wanted, not wished for, not thought of—perhaps I shall not be acknowledged if I go thither; and yet, mother, to confess the truth, thither I had thought to go."

"It was a good thought, and to be cherished," replied Norna; "we seek our friends when they are sick in health, why not when they are sick in mind, and surfeited with prosperity? Do not fail to go—it may be we shall meet there. Meanwhile our roads lie different. Farewell, and speak not of this meeting."

They parted, and Mordaunt remained standing by the

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lake, with his eyes fixed on Norna, until her tall dark form became invisible among the windings of the valley down which she wandered, and Mordaunt returned to his father's mansion, determined to follow counsel which coincided so well with his own wishes.

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CHAPTER XI.

—— All your ancient customs,
And long descended usages, I'll change.
Ye shall not eat, nor drink, nor speak, nor move,
Think, look, or walk, as ye were wont to do.
Even your marriage-beds shall know mutation;
The bride shall have the stock, the groom the wall;
For all old practice will I turn and change,
And call it reformation—marry, will I!

'Tis Even that we're at Odds.

The festal day approached, and still no invitation arrived for that guest, without whom, but a little space since, no feast could have been held in the island; while, on the other hand, such reports as reached them on every side spoke highly of the favour which Captain Cleveland enjoyed in the family of the old Udaller of Burgh-Westra. Swertha and the old Ranzelman shook their heads at these mutations, and reminded Mordaunt, by many a half-hint and innuendo, that he had incurred this eclipse by being so imprudently active to secure the safety of the stranger, when he lay at the mercy of the next wave beneath the cliffs of Sumburgh-head. "It is best to let saut water take its gate," said Swertha; "luck never came of crossing it."

"In troth," said the Ranzelman, "they are wise folks that let wave and withy haud their ain—luck never came of a half-drowned man, or a half-hanged ane either. Who was't shot Will Paterson off the Noss?—the Dutchman

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that he saved from sinking, I trow. To fling a drowning man a plank or a tow, may be the part of a Christian; but I say, keep hands aff him, if ye wad live and thrive free frae his danger."

"Ye are a wise man, Ranzelman, and a worthy," echoed Swertha, with a groan, "and ken how and whan to help a neighbour, as weel as ony man that ever drew a net."

"In troth, I have seen length of days," answered the Ranzelman, "and I have heard what the auld folk said to each other anent sic matters; and nae man in Zetland shall go farther than I will in any Christian service to a man on firm land; but if he cry 'Help!' out of the saut waves, that's another story."

"And yet, to think of this lad Cleveland standing in our Maister Mordaunt's light," said Swertha, "and with Magnus Troil, that thought him the flower of the island but on Whitsunday last, and Magnus, too, that's both held (when he's fresh, honest man) the wisest and wealthiest of Zetland!"

"He canna win by it," said the Ranzelman, with a look of the deepest sagacity. "There's whiles, Swertha, that the wisest of us (as I am sure I humbly confess mysell not to be) may be little better than gulls, and can no more win by doing deeds of folly than I can step over Sumburgh-head. It has been my own case once or twice in my life. But we shall see soon what ill is to come of all this, for good there cannot come."

And Swertha answered, with the same tone of prophetic wisdom, "Na, na, gude can never come on it, and that is ower truly said."

These doleful predictions, repeated from time to time, had some effect upon Mordaunt. He did not indeed sup-

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pose, that the charitable action of relieving a drowning man had subjected him, as a necessary and fatal consequence, to the unpleasant circumstances in which he was placed; yet he felt as if a sort of spell were drawn around him, of which he neither understood the nature nor the extent;—that some power, in short, beyond his own control, was acting upon his destiny, and, as it seemed, with no friendly influence. His curiosity, as well as his anxiety, was highly excited, and he continued determined, at all events, to make his appearance at the approaching festival, when he was impressed with the belief that something uncommon was necessarily to take place, which should determine his future views and prospects in life.

As the elder Mertoun was at this time in his ordinary state of health, it became necessary that his son should intimate to him his intended visit to Burgh-Westra. He did so; and his father desired to know the especial reason of his going thither at this particular time.

"It is a time of merry-making," replied the youth, "and all the country are assembled."

"And you are doubtless impatient to add another fool to the number.—Go—but beware how you walk in the path which you are about to tread—a fall from the cliffs of Foula were not more fatal."

"May I ask the reason of your caution, sir?" replied Mordaunt, breaking through the reserve which ordinarily subsisted betwixt him and his singular parent.

"Magnus Troil," said the elder Mertoun, "has two daughters—you are of the age when men look upon such gauds with eyes of affection, that they may afterwards learn to curse the day that first opened their eyes upon heaven! I bid you beware of them; for, as sure as that death and sin came into the world by woman, so sure are

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their soft words, and softer looks, the utter destruction and ruin of all who put faith in them."

Mordaunt had sometimes observed his father's marked dislike to the female sex, but had never before heard him give vent to it in terms so determined and precise. He replied, that the daughters of Magnus Troil were no more to him than any other females in the islands; "they were even of less importance," he said, "for they had broken off their friendship with him, without assigning any cause."

"And you go to seek the renewal of it?" answered his father. "Silly moth, that hast once escaped the taper without singeing thy wings, are you not contented with the safe obscurity of these wilds, but must hasten back to the flame, which is sure at length to consume thee? But why should I waste arguments in deterring thee from thy inevitable fate?—Go where thy destiny calls thee."

On the succeeding day, which was the eve of the great festival, Mordaunt set forth on his road to Burgh-Westra, pondering alternately on the injunctions of Norna—on the ominous words of his father—on the inauspicious auguries of Swertha and the Ranzelman of Jarlshof—and not without experiencing that gloom with which so many concurring circumstances of ill omen combined to oppress his mind.

"It bodes me but a cold reception at Burgh-Westra," said he; "but my stay shall be the shorter. I will but find out whether they have been deceived by this seafaring stranger, or whether they have acted out of pure caprice of temper, and love of change of company. If the first be the case, I will vindicate my character, and let Captain Cleveland look to himself;—if the latter,

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why, then, good-night to Burgh-Westra and all its inmates."

As he mentally meditated this last alternative, hurt pride, and a return of fondness for those to whom he supposed he was bidding farewell for ever, brought a tear into his eye, which he dashed off hastily and indignantly, as, mending his pace, he continued on his journey.

The weather being now serene and undisturbed, Mordaunt made his way with an ease that formed a striking contrast to the difficulties which he had encountered when he last travelled the same route; yet there was a less pleasing subject for comparison within his own mind.

"My breast," he said to himself, "was then against the wind, but my heart within was serene and happy. I would I had now the same careless feelings, were they to be bought by battling with the severest storm that ever blew across these lonely hills!"

With such thoughts, he arrived about noon at Harfra, the habitation, as the reader may remember, of the ingenious Mr. Yellowley. Our traveller had, upon the present occasion, taken care to be quite independent of the niggardly hospitality of this mansion, which was now become infamous on that account through the whole island, by bringing with him, in his small knapsack, such provisions as might have sufficed for a longer journey. In courtesy, however, or rather, perhaps, to get rid of his own disquieting thoughts, Mordaunt did not fail to call at the mansion, which he found in singular commotion. Triptolemus himself, invested with a pair of large jack-boots, went clattering up and down stairs, screaming out questions to his sister and his serving-woman Tronda, who replied with shriller and more complicated screeches. At length, Mrs. Baby herself made her appearance, her

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venerable person endued with what was then called a Joseph, an ample garment, which had once been green, but now, betwixt stains and patches, had become like the vesture of the patriarch whose name it bore—a garment of divers colours. A steeple-crowned hat, the purchase of some long-past moment, in which vanity had got the better of avarice, with a feather which had stood as much wind and rain as if it had been part of a seamew's wing, made up her equipment, save that in her hand she held a silver-mounted whip of antique fashion. This attire, as well as an air of determined bustle in the gait and appearance of Mrs. Barbara Yellowley, seemed to bespeak that she was prepared to take a journey, and cared not, as the saying goes, who knew that such was her determination.

She was the first that observed Mordaunt on his arrival, and she greeted him with a degree of mingled emotion. "Be good to us!" she exclaimed, "if here is not the canty callant that wears yon thing about his neck, and that snapped up our goose as light as if it had been a sandie-lavrock!" The admiration of the gold chain, which had formerly made so deep an impression on her mind, was marked in the first part of her speech, the recollection of the untimely fate of the smoked goose was commemorated in the second clause. "I will lay the burden of my life," she instantly added, "that he is ganging our gate."

"I am bound for Burgh-Westra, Mrs. Yellowley," said Mordaunt.

"And blithe will we be of your company," she added—"its early day to eat; but if you liked a barley scone and a drink of bland—natheless, it is ill travelling on a full stomach, besides quelling your appetite for the feast that

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is biding you this day; for all sort of prodigality there will doubtless be."

Mordaunt produced his own stores, and, explaining that he did not love to be burdensome to them on this second occasion, invited them to partake of the provisions he had to offer. Poor Triptolemus, who seldom saw half so good a dinner as his guest's luncheon, threw himself upon the good cheer, like Sancho on the scum of Camacho's kettle, and even the lady herself could not resist the temptation, though she gave way to it with more moderation, and with something like a sense of shame. "She had let the fire out," she said, "for it was a pity wasting fuel in so cold a country, and so she had not thought of getting any thing ready, as they were to set out so soon; and so she could not but say, that the young gentleman's *nacket* looked very good; and besides, she had some curiosity to see whether the folks in that country cured their beef in the same way they did in the north of Scotland." Under which combined considerations, Dame Baby made a hearty experiment on the refreshments which thus unexpectedly presented themselves.

When their extemporary repast was finished, the factor became solicitous to take the road; and now Mordaunt discovered, that the alacrity with which he had been received by Mistress Baby, was not altogether disinterested. Neither she nor the learned Triptolemus felt much disposed to commit themselves to the wilds of Zetland, without the assistance of a guide; and although they could have commanded the assistance of one of their own labouring folks, yet the cautious agriculturist observed, that it would be losing at least one day's work; and his sister multiplied his apprehensions by echoing back, "one day's work!—ye may weel say twenty—for,

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set ane of their noses within the smell of a kail-pot, and their lugs within the sound of a fiddle, and whistle them back if ye can!"

Now the fortunate arrival of Mordaunt, in the very nick of time, not to mention the good cheer which he brought with him, made him as welcome as any one could possibly be to a threshold, which, on all ordinary occasions, abhorred the passage of a guest; nor was Mr. Yellowley altogether insensible of the pleasure he promised himself in detailing his plans of improvement to his young companion, and enjoying, what his fate seldom assigned him—the company of a patient and admiring listener.

As the factor and his sister were to prosecute their journey on horseback, it only remained to mount their guide and companion; a thing easily accomplished, where there are such numbers of shaggy, long-backed, short-legged ponies, running wild upon the extensive moors, which are the common pasturage for the cattle of every township, where shelties, geese, swine, goats, sheep, and little Zetland cows, are turned out promiscuously, and often in numbers which can obtain but precarious subsistence from the niggard vegetation. There is, indeed, a right of individual property in all these animals, which are branded or tattooed by each owner with his own peculiar mark; but when any passenger has occasional use for a pony, he never scruples to lay hold of the first which he can catch, puts on a halter, and, having rode him as far as he finds convenient, turns the animal loose to find his way back again as he best can—a matter in which the ponies are sufficiently sagacious.

Although this general exercise of property was one of the enormities which in due time the factor intended to

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abolish, yet, like a wise man, he scrupled not, in the meantime, to avail himself of so general a practice, which, he condescended to allow, was particularly convenient for those who (as chanced to be his own present case) had no ponies of their own on which their neighbours could retaliate. Three shelties, therefore, were procured from the hill—little shagged animals, more resembling wild bears than any thing of the horse tribe, yet possessed of no small degree of strength and spirit, and able to endure as much fatigue and indifferent usage as any creatures in the world.

Two of these horses were already provided and fully accoutred for the journey. One of them, destined to bear the fair person of Mistress Baby, was decorated with a huge side-saddle of venerable antiquity—a mass, as it were, of cushion and padding, from which depended, on all sides, a housing of ancient tapestry, which having been originally intended for a horse of ordinary size, covered up the diminutive palfrey over which it was spread, from the ears to the tail, and from the shoulder to the fetlock, leaving nothing visible but its head, which looked fiercely out from these enfoldments, like the heraldic representation of a lion looking out of a bush. Mordaunt gallantly lifted up the fair Mistress Yellowley, and, at the expense of very slight exertion, placed her upon the summit of her mountainous saddle. It is probable, that, on feeling herself thus squired and attended upon, and experiencing the long unwonted consciousness that she was attired in her best array, some thoughts dawned upon Mistress Baby's mind, which checkered for an instant those habitual ideas about thrift, that formed the daily and all-engrossing occupation of her soul. She glanced her eye upon her faded Joseph, and on the long housings of her saddle, as

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she observed, with a smile, to Mordaunt, that "travelling was a pleasant thing in fine weather and agreeable company, if," she added, glancing a look at a place where the embroidery was somewhat frayed and tattered, "it was not sae wasteful to ane's horse-furniture."

Meanwhile her brother stepped stoutly to his steed; and, as he chose, notwithstanding the serenity of the weather, to throw a long red cloak over his other garments, his pony was even more completely enveloped in drapery than that of his sister. It happened, moreover, to be an animal of an high and contumacious spirit, bouncing and curvetting occasionally under the weight of Triptolemus, with a vivacity which, notwithstanding his Yorkshire descent, rather deranged him in the saddle; gambols which, as the palfrey itself was not visible, except upon the strictest inspection, had, at a little distance, an effect as if they were the voluntary movements of the cloaked cavalier, without the assistance of any other legs than those with which nature had provided him; and, to any who had viewed Triptolemus under such a persuasion, the gravity, and even distress, announced in his countenance, must have made a ridiculous contrast to the vivacious caprioles with which he piaffed along the moor.

Mordaunt kept up with this worthy couple, mounted, according to the simplicity of the time and country, on the first and readiest pony which they had been able to press into the service, with no other accoutrement of any kind than the halter which served to guide him; while Mr. Yellowley, seeing with pleasure his guide thus readily provided with a steed, privately resolved, that this rude custom of helping travellers to horses, without leave of the proprietor, should not be abated in Zetland, until he came to possess a herd of ponies belonging in property

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to himself, and exposed to suffer in the way of retaliation.

But to other uses or abuses of the country, Triptolemus Yellowley showed himself less tolerant. Long and wearisome were the discourses he held with Mordaunt, or (to speak much more correctly) the harangues which he inflicted upon him, concerning the changes which his own advent in these isles was about to occasion. Unskilled as he was in the modern arts by which an estate may be improved to such a high degree that it shall altogether slip through the proprietor's fingers, Triptolemus had at least the zeal, if not the knowledge, of a whole agricultural society in his own person; nor was he surpassed by any who has followed him, in that noble spirit which scorns to balance profit against outlay, but holds the glory of effecting a great change on the face of the land, to be, like virtue, in a great degree its own reward.

No part of the wild and mountainous region over which Mordaunt guided him, but what suggested to his active imagination some scheme of improvement and alteration. He would make a road through yon scarce passable glen, where at present nothing but the sure-footed creatures on which they were mounted could tread with any safety. He would substitute better houses for the skeoes, or sheds built of dry stones, in which the inhabitants cured or manufactured their fish—they should brew good ale instead of bland—they should plant forests where tree never grew, and find mines of treasure where a Danish skilling was accounted a coin of a most respectable denomination. All these mutations, with many others, did the worthy factor resolve upon, speaking at the same time with the utmost confidence of the countenance and assist-

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ance which he was to receive from the higher classes, and especially from Magnus Troil.

"I will impart some of my ideas to the poor man," he said, "before we are both many hours older; and you will mark how grateful he will be to the instructor who brings him knowledge, which is better than wealth."

"I would not have you build too strongly on that," said Mordaunt, by way of caution; "Magnus Troil's boat is kittle to trim—he likes his own ways, and his country-ways, and you will as soon teach your sheltie to dive like a sealgh, as bring Magnus to take a Scottish fashion in the place of a Norse one—and yet, if he is steady to his old customs, he may perhaps be as changeable as another in his old friendships."

"*Heus, tu inepte!*" said the scholar of Saint Andrews, "steady or unsteady, what can it matter?—am not I here in point of trust, and in point of power? and shall a Fowd, by which barbarous appellative this Magnus Troil still calls himself, presume to measure judgment and weigh reasons with me, who represent the full dignity of the Chamberlain of the islands of Orkney and Zetland?"

"Still," said Mordaunt, "I would advise you not to advance too rashly upon his prejudices. Magnus Troil, from the hour of his birth to this day, never saw a greater man than himself, and it is difficult to bridle an old horse for the first time. Besides, he has at no time in his life been a patient listener to long explanations, so it is possible that he may quarrel with your proposed reformation, before you can convince him of its advantages."

"How mean you, young man?" said the factor. "Is there one who dwells in these islands, who is so wretchedly blind as not to be sensible of their deplorable defects?

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Can a man," he added, rising into enthusiasm as he spoke, "or even a beast, look at that thing there, which they have the impudence to call a corn-mill,* without trembling to think that corn should be intrusted to such a miserable molendinary? The wretches are obliged to have at least fifty in each parish, each trundling away upon its paltry mill-stone, under the thatch of a roof no bigger than a bee-skep, instead of a noble and seemly baron's mill, of which you would hear the clack through the haill country, and that casts the meal through the mill-eye, by forpits at a time!"

"Ay, ay, brother," said his sister, "that's spoken like your wise sell. The mair cost the mair honour—that's your word ever mair. Can it no creep into your wise head, man, that ilka body grinds their ain nievefu' of meal in this country, without plaguing themsells about baron's mills, and thirls, and sucken, and the like trade? How mony a time have I heard you bell-the-cat with auld Edie Netherstane, the miller at Grindleburn, and wi' his very knave too, about in-town and out-town multures—lock, gowpen, and knaveship, and a' the lave o't; and now naething less will serve you than to bring in the very same fashery on a wheen puir bodies, that big ilk ane a mill for themselves, sic as it is?"

* There is certainly something very extraordinary to a stranger in Zetland corn-mills. They are of the smallest possible size; the wheel which drives them is horizontal, and the cogs are turned diagonally to the water. The beam itself stands upright, and is inserted in a stone quern of the old-fashioned construction, which it turns round, and thus performs its duty. Had Robinson Crusoe ever been in Zetland, he would have had no difficulty in contriving a machine for grinding corn in his desert island. These mills are thatched over in a little hovel, which has much the air of a pig-sty. There may be five hundred such mills on one island, not capable any one of them of grinding above a sackful of corn at a time.

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"Dinna tell me of gowpen and knaveship!" exclaimed the indignant agriculturist; "better pay the half of the grist to the miller, to have the rest grund in a Christian manner, than put good grain into a bairn's whirligig. Look at it for a moment, Baby—Bide still, ye cursed imp!" This interjection was applied to his pony, which began to be extremely impatient, while its rider interrupted his journey, to point out all the weak points of the Zetland Mill—"Look at it, I say—it's just one degree better than a hand-quern—it has neither wheel nor trindle—neither cog nor happer—Bide still, there's a canny beast—it canna grind a bickerfu' of meal in a quarter of an hour, and that will be mair like a mash for horse than a meltith for man's use—Wherefore—Bide still, I say—wherefore—wherefore—The deil's in the beast, and nae good, I think!"

As he uttered the last words, the shelty, which had pranced and curvetted for some time with much impatience, at length got its head betwixt its legs, and at once canted its rider into the little rivulet, which served to drive the depreciated engine he was surveying; then emancipating itself from the folds of the cloak, fled back towards its own wilderness, neighing in scorn, and flinging out its heels at every five yards.

Laughing heartily at his disaster, Mordaunt helped the old man to arise; while his sister sarcastically congratulated him on having fallen rather into the shallows of a Zetland rivulet, than the depths of a Scottish mill-pond. Disdaining to reply to this sarcasm, Triptolemus, so soon as he had recovered his legs, shaken his ears, and found that the folds of his cloak had saved him from being much wet in the scanty streamlet, exclaimed aloud, "I will have cussers from Lanarkshire—brood mares from

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Ayrshire—I will not have one of these cursed abortions left on the islands, to break honest folk's necks—I say, Baby, I will rid the land of them."

"Ye had better wring your ain cloak, Triptolemus," answered Baby.

Mordaunt meanwhile was employed in catching another pony, from a herd which strayed at some distance; and, having made a halter out of twisted rushes, he seated the dismayed agriculturist in safety upon a more quiet, though less active steed, than that which he had at first bestrode.

But Mr. Yellowley's fall had operated as a considerable sedative upon his spirits, and, for the full space of five miles' travel, he said scarce a word, leaving full course to the melancholy aspirations and lamentations which his sister Baby bestowed on the old bridle, which the pony had carried off in its flight, and which, she observed, after having lasted for eighteen years come Martinmas, might now be considered as a castaway thing. Finding she had thus the field to herself, the old lady launched forth into a lecture upon economy, according to her own idea of that virtue, which seemed to include a system of privations, which, though observed with the sole purpose of saving money, might, if undertaken upon other principles, have ranked high in the history of a religious ascetic.

She was but little interrupted by Mordaunt, who, conscious he was now on the eve of approaching Burgh-Westra, employed himself rather in the task of anticipating the nature of the reception he was about to meet with there from two beautiful young women, than with the prosing of an old one, however wisely she might prove that small-beer was more wholesome than strong-ale,

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and that if her brother had bruised his ankle-bone in his tumble, cumfrey and butter was better to bring him round again, than all the doctor's drugs in the world.

But now the dreary moorlands, over which their path had hitherto lain, were exchanged for a more pleasant prospect, opening on a salt-water lake, or arm of the sea, which ran up far inland, and was surrounded by flat and fertile ground, producing crops better than the experienced eye of Triptolemus Yellowley had as yet witnessed in Zetland. In the midst of this Goshen stood the mansion of Burgh-Westra, screened from the north and east by a ridge of heathy hills which lay behind it, and commanding an interesting prospect of the lake and its parent ocean, as well as the islands, and more distant mountains. From the mansion itself, as well as from almost every cottage in the adjacent hamlet, arose such a rich cloud of vapoury smoke, as showed, that the preparations for the festival were not confined to the principal residence of Magnus himself, but extended through the whole vicinage.

"My certie," said Mrs. Baby Yellowley, "ane wad think the haill town was on fire! The very hill-side smells of their wastefulness, and a hungry heart wad scarce seek better kitchen * to a barley-scone, than just to waft it in the reek that's rising out of yon lums."

* What is eat by way of relish to dry bread, is called *kitchen* in Scotland, as cheese, dried fish, or the like relishing morsels.

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CHAPTER XII.

——— Thou hast described
A hot friend cooling. Ever note, Lucilius,
When love begins to sicken and decay,
It useth an enforced ceremony.
There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

If the smell which was wafted from the chimneys of Burgh-Westra up to the barren hills by which the mansion was surrounded, could, as Mistress Barbara opined, have refreshed the hungry, the noise which proceeded from thence might have given hearing to the deaf. It was a medley of all sounds, and all connected with jollity and kind welcome. Nor were the sights associated with them less animating.

Troops of friends were seen in the act of arriving—their dispersed ponies flying to the moors in every direction, to recover their own pastures in the best way they could;—such, as we have already said, being the usual mode of discharging the cavalry which had been levied for a day's service. At a small but commodious harbour connected with the house and hámlet, those visitors were landing from their boats, who, living in distant islands, and along the coast, had preferred making their journey by sea. Mordaunt and his companions might see each party pausing frequently to greet each other, and strolling on successively to the house, whose ever open gate

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received them alternately in such numbers, that it seemed the extent of the mansion, though suited to the opulence and hospitality of the owner, was scarce, on this occasion, sufficient for the guests.

Among the confused sounds of mirth and welcome which arose at the entrance of each new company, Mordaunt thought he could distinguish the loud laugh and hearty salutation of the Sire of the mansion, and began to feel more deeply than before, the anxious doubt, whether that cordial reception, which was distributed so freely to all others, would be on this occasion extended to him. As they came on, they heard the voluntary scrapings and bravura effusions of the gallant fiddlers, who impatiently flung already from their bows those sounds with which they were to animate the evening. The clamour of the cook's assistants, and the loud scolding tones of the cook himself, were also to be heard—sounds of dissonance at any other time, but which, subdued with others, and by certain happy associations, form no disagreeable part of the full chorus which always precedes a rural feast.

Meanwhile, the guests advanced, each full of their own thoughts. Mordaunt's we have already noticed. Baby was wrapt up in the melancholy grief and surprise excited by the positive conviction, that so much victuals had been cooked at once as were necessary to feed all the mouths which were clamouring around her—an enormity of expense, which, though she was no way concerned in bearing it, affected her nerves, as the beholding a massacre would touch those of the most indifferent spectator, however well assured of his own personal safety. She sickened, in short, at the sight of so much extravagance, like Abyssinian Bruce, when he saw the luckless minstrels of

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Gondar hacked to pieces by the order of Ras Michael. As for her brother, they being now arrived where the rude and antique instruments of Zetland agriculture lay scattered in the usual confusion of a Scottish barn-yard, his thoughts were at once engrossed in the deficiencies of the one-stilted plough—of the *twiscaz*, with which they dig peats—of the sledges on which they transport commodities—of all and every thing, in short, in which the usages of the islands differed from those of the mainland of Scotland. The sight of these imperfect instruments stirred the blood of Triptolemus Yellowley, as that of the bold warrior rises at seeing the arms and insignia of the enemy he is about to combat; and faithful to his high emprise, he thought less of the hunger which his journey had occasioned, although about to be satisfied by such a dinner as rarely fell to his lot, than upon the task which he had undertaken, of civilizing the manners, and improving the cultivation, of Zetland.

"*Jacta est alea,*" he muttered to himself; "this very day shall prove whether the Zetlanders are worthy of our labours, or whether their minds are as incapable of cultivation as their peat-mosses. Yet let us be cautious, and watch the soft time of speech. I feel, by my own experience, that it were best to let the body, in its present state, take the place of the mind. A mouthful of that same roast-beef, which smells so delicately, will form an apt introduction to my grand plan for improving the breed of stock."

By this time the visitors had reached the low but ample front of Magnus Troil's residence, which seemed of various dates, with large and ill-imagined additions, hastily adapted to the original building, as the increasing estate, or enlarged family, of successive proprietors, appeared to

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each to demand. Beneath a low, broad, and large porch, supported by two huge carved posts, once the head ornaments of vessels which had found shipwreck upon the coast, stood Magnus himself, intent on the hospitable toil of receiving and welcoming the numerous guests who successively approached. His strong portly figure was well adapted to the dress which he wore—a blue coat of an antique cut, lined with scarlet, and laced and looped with gold down the seams and button-holes, and along the ample cuffs. Strong and masculine features, rendered ruddy and brown by frequent exposure to severe weather —a quantity of most venerable silver hair, which fell in unshorn profusion from under his gold-laced hat, and was carelessly tied with a ribbon behind, expressed at once his advanced age, his hasty, yet well-conditioned temper, and his robust constitution. As our travellers approached him, a shade of displeasure seemed to cross his brow, and to interrupt for an instant the honest and hearty burst of hilarity with which he had been in the act of greeting all prior arrivals. When he approached Triptolemus Yellowley, he drew himself up, so as to mix, as it were, some share of the stately importance of the opulent Udaller with the welcome afforded by the frank and hospitable landlord.

"You are welcome, Mr. Yellowley," was his address to the factor; "you are welcome to Westra—the wind has blown you on a rough coast, and we that are the natives must be kind to you as we can. This, I believe, is your sister—Mrs. Barbara Yellowley, permit me the honour of a neighbourly salute."—And so saying, with a daring and self-devoted courtesy, which would find no equal in our degenerate days, he actually ventured to salute the withered cheek of the spinstress, who relaxed so much of

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her usual peevishness of expression, as to receive the courtesy with something which approached to a smile. He then looked full at Mordaunt Mertoun, and, without offering his hand, said, in a tone somewhat broken by suppressed agitation, "You too are welcome, Master Mordaunt."

"Did I not think so," said Mordaunt, naturally offended by the coldness of his host's manner, "I had not been here—and it is not yet too late to turn back."

"Young man," replied Magnus, "you know better than most, that from these doors no man can turn, without an offence to their owner. I pray you, disturb not my guests by your ill-timed scruples. When Magnus Troil says welcome, all are welcome who are within hearing of his voice, and it is an indifferent loud one.—Walk on, my worthy guests, and let us see what cheer my lasses can make you within doors."

So saying, and taking care to make his manner so general to the whole party, that Mordaunt should not be able to appropriate any particular portion of the welcome to himself, nor yet to complain of being excluded from all share in it, the Udaller ushered the guests into his house, where two large outer rooms, which, on the present occasion, served the purpose of a modern saloon, were already crowded with guests of every description.

The furniture was sufficiently simple, and had a character peculiar to the situation of these stormy islands. Magnus Troil was, indeed, like most of the higher class of Zetland proprietors, a friend to the distressed traveller, whether by sea or land, and had repeatedly exerted his whole authority in protecting the property and persons of shipwrecked mariners; yet so frequent were wrecks upon that tremendous coast, and so many unappropriated

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articles were constantly flung ashore, that the interior of the house bore sufficient witness to the ravages of the ocean, and to the exercise of those rights which the lawyers term *Flotsome and Jetsome.* The chairs, which were arranged around the walls, were such as are used in cabins, and many of them were of foreign construction; the mirrors and cabinets, which were placed against the walls for ornament or convenience, had, it was plain from their form, been constructed for ship-board, and one or two of the latter were of strange and unknown wood. Even the partition which separated the two apartments, seemed constructed out of the bulk-heads of some large vessel, clumsily adapted to the service which it at present performed, by the labour of some native joiner. To a stranger, these evident marks and tokens of human misery might, at the first glance, form a contrast with the scene of mirth with which they were now associated; but the association was so familiar to the natives, that it did not for a moment interrupt the course of their glee.

To the younger part of these revellers the presence of Mordaunt was like a fresh charm of enjoyment. All came around him to marvel at his absence, and all, by their repeated inquiries, plainly showed that they conceived it had been entirely voluntary on his side. The youth felt that this general acceptation relieved his anxiety on one painful point. Whatever prejudice the family of Burgh-Westra might have adopted respecting him, it must be of a private nature; and at least he had not the additional pain of finding that he was depreciated in the eyes of society at large; and his vindication, when he found opportunity to make one, would not require to be extended beyond the circle of a single family. This was consoling; though his heart still throbbed with anxiety at

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the thought of meeting with his estranged, but still beloved friends. Laying the excuse of his absence on his father's state of health, he made his way through the various groups of friends and guests, each of whom seemed willing to detain him as long as possible, and having, by presenting them to one or two families of consequence, got rid of his travelling companions, who at first stuck fast as burs, he reached at length the door of a small apartment, which, opening from one of the large exterior rooms we have mentioned, Minna and Brenda had been permitted to fit up after their own taste, and to call their peculiar property.

Mordaunt had contributed no small share of the invention and mechanical execution employed in fitting up this favourite apartment, and in disposing its ornaments. It was, indeed, during his last residence at Burgh-Westra, as free to his entrance and occupation, as to its proper mistresses. But now, so much were times altered, that he remained with his finger on the latch, uncertain whether he should take the freedom to draw it, until Brenda's voice pronounced the words, "Come in, then," in the tone of one who is interrupted by an unwelcome disturber, who is to be heard and despatched with all the speed possible.

At this signal Mertoun entered the fanciful cabinet of the sisters, which by the addition of many ornaments, including some articles of considerable value, had been fitted up for the approaching festival. The daughters of Magnus, at the moment of Mordaunt's entrance, were seated in deep consultation with the stranger Cleveland, and with a little slight-made old man, whose eye retained all the vivacity of spirit, which had supported him under the thousand vicissitudes of a changeful and precarious

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life, and which, accompanying him in his old age, rendered his gray hairs less awfully reverend perhaps, but not less beloved, than would a more grave and less imaginative expression of countenance and character. There was even a penetrating shrewdness mingled in the look of curiosity, with which, as he stepped for an instant aside, he seemed to watch the meeting of Mordaunt with the two lovely sisters.

The reception the youth met with resembled, in general character, that which he had experienced from Magnus himself; but the maidens could not so well cover their sense of the change of circumstances under which they met. Both blushed, as, rising, and without extending the hand, far less offering the cheek, as the fashion of the times permitted, and almost exacted, they paid to Mordaunt the salutation due to an ordinary acquaintance. But the blush of the older was one of those transient evidences of flitting emotion, that vanish as fast as the passing thought which excites them. In an instant she stood before the youth calm and cold, returning, with guarded and cautious courtesy, the usual civilities, which, with a faltering voice, Mordaunt endeavoured to present to her. The emotion of Brenda bore, externally at least, a deeper and more agitating character. Her blush extended over every part of her beautiful skin which her dress permitted to be visible, including her slender neck, and the upper region of a finely formed bosom. Neither did she even attempt to reply to what share of his confused compliment Mordaunt addressed to her in particular, but regarded him with eyes in which displeasure was evidently mingled with feelings of regret, and recollections of former times. Mordaunt felt, as it were, assured upon the instant, that the regard of Minna was extin-

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guished, but that it might be yet possible to recover that of the milder Brenda; and such is the waywardness of human fancy, that though he had never hitherto made any distinct difference betwixt these two beautiful and interesting girls, the favour of her, which seemed most absolutely withdrawn, became at the moment the most interesting in his eyes.

He was disturbed in these hasty reflections by Cleveland, who advanced with military frankness, to pay his compliments to his preserver, having only delayed long enough to permit the exchange of the ordinary salutation betwixt the visitor and the ladies of the family. He made his approach with so good a grace, that it was impossible for Mordaunt, although he dated his loss of favour at Burgh-Westra from the stranger's appearance on the coast, and domestication in the family, to do less than return his advances as courtesy demanded, accept his thanks with an appearance of satisfaction, and hope that his time had passed pleasantly since their last meeting.

Cleveland was about to answer, when he was anticipated by the little old man, formerly noticed, who now thrusting himself forward, and seizing Mordaunt's hand, kissed him on the forehead; and then at the same time echoed and answered his question—"How passes time at Burgh-Westra? Was it you that asked it, my prince of the cliff and of the scaur? How should it pass, but with all the wings that beauty and joy can add to help its flight!"

"And wit and song, too, my good old friend," said Mordaunt, half-serious, half-jesting, as he shook the old man cordially by the hand—"These cannot be wanting where Claud Halcro comes!"

"Jeer me not, Mordaunt, my good lad," replied the old

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man; "when your foot is as slow as mine, your wit frozen, and your song out of tune——"

"How can you belie yourself, my good master?" answered Mordaunt, who was not unwilling to avail himself of his old friend's peculiarities to introduce something like conversation, break the awkwardness of this singular meeting, and gain time for observation, ere requiring an explanation of the change of conduct which the family seemed to have adopted towards him. "Say not so," he continued. "Time, my old friend, lays his hand lightly on the bard. Have I not heard you say, the poet partakes the immortality of his song? and surely the great English poet, you used to tell us of, was elder than yourself when he pulled the bow-oar among all the wits of London."

This alluded to a story which was, as the French term it, Halcro's *cheval de bataille*, and any allusion to which was certain at once to place him in the saddle, and to push his hobby-horse into full career.

His laughing eye kindled with a sort of enthusiasm, which the ordinary folk of this world might have called crazed, while he dashed into the subject which he best loved to talk upon. "Alas, alas! my dear Mordaunt Mertoun, silver is silver, and waxes not dim by use—and pewter is pewter, and grows the longer the duller. It is not for poor Claud Halcro to name himself in the same twelvemonth with the immortal John Dryden. True it is, as I may have told you before, that I have seen that great man, nay, I have been in the Wits' Coffee-house, as it was then called, and had once a pinch out of his own very snuff-box. I must have told you all how it happened, but here is Captain Cleveland who never heard it.—I lodged, you must know, in Russel Street—I

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question not but you know Russel Street, Covent Garden, Captain Cleveland?"

"I should know its latitude pretty well, Mr. Halcro," said the Captain, smiling; "but I believe you mentioned the circumstance yesterday, and besides, we have the day's duty in hand—you must play us this song which we are to study."

"It will not serve the turn now," said Halcro, "we must think of something that will take in our dear Mordaunt, the first voice in the island, whether for a part or solo. I will never be he will touch a string to you, unless Mordaunt Mertoun is to help us out.—What say you, my fairest Night?"—what think you, my sweet Dawn of Day?" he added, addressing the young women, upon whom, as we have said elsewhere, he had long before bestowed these allegorical names.

"Mr. Mordaunt Mertoun," said Minna, "has come too late to be of our band on this occasion—it is our misfortune, but it cannot be helped."

"How? what?" said Halcro, hastily—"too late—and you have practised together all your lives? take my word, my bonny lasses, that old tunes are sweetest, and old friends surest. Mr. Cleveland has a fine bass, that must be allowed; but I would have you trust for the first effect to one of the twenty fine airs you can sing where Mordaunt's tenor joins so well with your own witchery—here is my lovely Day approves of the change in her heart."

"You were never in your life more mistaken, father Halcro," said Brenda, her cheeks again reddening, more with displeasure, it seemed, than with shame.

"Nay, but how is this?" said the old man, pausing, and looking at them alternately. "What have we got here?—a cloudy night and a red morning?—that be

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tokens rough weather.—What means all this, young women?—where lies the offence?—In me, I fear; for the blame is always laid upon the oldest when young folks like you go by the ears."

"The blame is not with you, father Halcro," said Minna, rising, and taking her sister by the arm, "if indeed there be blame anywhere."

"I should fear then, Minna," said Mordaunt, endeavouring to soften his tone into one of indifferent pleasantry, "that the new comer has brought the offence along with him."

"When no offence is taken," replied Minna, with her usual gravity, "it matters not by whom such may have been offered."

"Is it possible, Minna!" exclaimed Mordaunt, "and is it you who speak thus to me?—and you too, Brenda, can you too judge so hardly of me, yet without permitting me one moment of honest and frank explanation?"

"Those who should know best," answered Brenda, in a low but decisive tone of voice, "have told us their pleasure, and it must be done.—Sister, I think we have staid too long here, and shall be wanted elsewhere.—Mr. Mertoun will excuse us on so busy a day."

The sisters linked their arms together. Halcro in vain endeavoured to stop them, making, at the same time, a theatrical gesture, and exclaiming,

"Now, Day and Night, but this is wondrous strange!"

Then turned to Mordaunt Mertoun, and added—"The girls are possessed with the spirit of mutability, showing, as our master Spenser well saith, that

'Among all living creatures, more or lesse,
Change still doth reign, and keep the greater sway.'

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Captain Cleveland," he continued, "know you any thing that has happened to put these two juvenile Graces out of tune?"

"He will lose his reckoning," answered Cleveland, "that spends time in inquiring why the wind shifts a point, or why a woman changes her mind. Were I Mr. Mordaunt, I would not ask the proud wenches another question on such a subject."

"It is a friendly advice, Captain Cleveland," replied Mordaunt, "and I will not hold it the less so that it has been given unasked. Allow me to inquire if you are yourself as indifferent to the opinion of your female friends, as it seems you would have me to be?"

"Who, I?" said the Captain, with an air of frank indifference, "I never thought twice upon such a subject. I never saw a woman worth thinking twice about after the anchor was a-peak—on shore it is another thing; and I will laugh, sing, dance, and make love, if they like it, with twenty girls, were they but half so pretty as those who have left us, and make them heartily welcome to change their course in the sound of a boatswain's whistle. It will be odds but I wear as fast as they can."

A patient is seldom pleased with that sort of consolation which is founded on holding light the malady of which he complains; and Mordaunt felt disposed to be offended with Captain Cleveland, both for taking notice of his embarrassment, and intruding upon him his own opinion; and he replied, therefore, somewhat sharply, "that Captain Cleveland's sentiments were only suited to such as had the art to become universal favourites wherever chance happened to throw them, and who could not lose in one place more than their merit was sure to gain for them in another."

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This was spoken ironically; but there was, to confess the truth, a superior knowledge of the world, and a consciousness of external merit at least, about the man, which rendered his interference doubly disagreeable. As Sir Lucius O'Trigger says, there was an air of success about Captain Cleveland which was mighty provoking. Young, handsome, and well assured, his air of nautical bluntness sat naturally and easily upon him, and was perhaps particularly well fitted to the simple manners of the remote country in which he found himself; and where, even in the best families, a greater degree of refinement might have rendered his conversation rather less acceptable. He was contented, in the present instance, to smile good-humouredly at the obvious discontent of Mordaunt Mertoun, and replied, "You are angry with me, my good friend, but you cannot make me angry with you. The fair hands of all the pretty women I ever saw in my life would never have fished me up out of the Roost of Sumburgh. So, pray, do not quarrel with me; for here is Mr. Halcro witness that I have struck both jack and topsail, and should you fire a broadside into me, cannot return a single shot."

"Ay, ay," said Halcro, "you must be friends with Captain Cleveland, Mordaunt. Never quarrel with your friend because a woman is whimsical. Why, man, if they kept one humour, how the devil could we make so many songs on them as we do? Even old Dryden himself, glorious old John, could have said little about a girl that was always of one mind—as well write verses upon a mill-pond. It is your tides and your roosts, and your currents and eddies, that come and go, and ebb and flow, (by Heaven! I run into rhyme when I so much as think upon them,) that smile one day, rage the next, flatter and

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devour, delight and ruin us, and so forth—it is these that give the real soul of poetry. Did you never hear my Adieu to the Lass of Northmaven—that was poor Bet Stimbister, whom I call Mary for the sound's sake, as I call myself Hacon after my great ancestor Hacon Goldemund, or Haco with the golden mouth, who came to the island with Harold Harfager, and was his chief Scald?—Well, but where was I?—Oh, ay—poor Bet Stimbister, she (and partly some debt) was the cause of my leaving the isles of Hialtland, (better so called than Shetland, or Zetland even,) and taking to the broad world. I have had a tramp of it since that time—I have battled my way through the world, Captain, as a man of mold may, that has a light head, a light purse, and a heart as light as them both—fought my way, and paid my way—that is, either with money or wit—have seen kings changed and deposed, as you would turn a tenant out of a scathold—knew all the wits of the age, and especially the glorious John Dryden—what man in the islands can say as much, barring lying?—I had a pinch out of his own snuff-box—I will tell you how I came by such promotion."

"But the song, Mr. Halcro," said Captain Cleveland.

"The song?" answered Halcro, seizing the Captain by the button,—for he was too much accustomed to have his audience escape from him during recitation, not to put in practice all the usual means of prevention,—"The song? Why I gave a copy of it, with fifteen others, to the immortal John. You shall hear it—you shall hear them all, if you will but stand still a moment; and you, too, my dear boy, Mordaunt Mertoun, I have scarce heard a word from your mouth these six months, and now you are running away from me." So saying, he secured him with his other hand."

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"Nay, now he has got us both in tow," said the seaman, "there is nothing for it but hearing him out, though he spins as tough a yarn as ever an old man-of-war's-man twisted on the watch at midnight."

"Nay, now, be silent, be silent, and let one of us speak at once," said the poet, imperatively; while Cleveland and Mordaunt, looking at each other with a ludicrous expression of resignation to their fate, waited in submission for the well-known and inevitable tale. "I will tell you all about it," continued Halcro. "I was knocked about the world like other young fellows, doing this, that, and t'other, for a livelihood; for, thank God, I could turn my hand to any thing—but loving still the Muses as much as if the ungrateful jades had found me, like so many blockheads, in my own coach-and-six. However, I held out till my cousin, old Lawrence Linkletter, died, and left me the bit of an island yonder; although, by the way, Cultmalindie was as near to him as I was; but Lawrence loved wit, though he had little of his own. Well, he left me the wee bit island—it is as barren as Parnassus itself. What then?—I have a penny to spend, a penny to keep my purse, a penny to give to the poor—ay, and a bed and a bottle for a friend, as you shall know, boys, if you will go back with me when this merriment is over.—But where was I in my story?"

"Near port, I hope," answered Cleveland; but Halcro was too determined a narrator to be interrupted by the broadest hint.

"Oh, ay," he resumed, with the self-satisfied air of one who has recovered the thread of a story, "I was in my old lodgings in Russel Street, with old Timothy Thimblethwaite, the Master Fashioner, then the best-known man about town. He made for all the wits, and for the

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dull boobies of fortune besides, and made the one pay for the other. He never denied a wit credit save in jest, or for the sake of getting a repartee; and he was in correspondence with all that was worth knowing about town. He had letters from Crowne, and Tate, and Prior, and Tom Brown, and all the famous fellows of the time, with such pellets of wit, that there was no reading them without laughing ready to die, and all ending with craving a further term for payment."

"I should have thought the tailor would have found that jest rather serious," said Mordaunt.

"Not a bit—not a bit," replied his eulogist, "Tim Thimblethwaite (he was a Cumberland-man by birth) had the soul of a prince—ay, and died with the fortune of one; for woe betide the custard-gorged alderman that came under Tim's goose after he had got one of those letters—egad, he was sure to pay the kain! Why, Thimblethwaite was thought to be the original of little Tom Bibber, in glorious John's comedy of the Wild Gallant; and I know that he has trusted, ay, and lent John money to boot out of his own pocket, at a time when all his fine court friends blew cold enough. He trusted me too, and I have been two months on the score at a time for my upper room. To be sure, I was obliging in his way—not that I exactly could shape or sew, nor would that have been decorous for a gentleman of good descent; but I—eh, eh—I drew bills—summed up the books——"

"Carried home the clothes of the wits and aldermen, and got lodging for your labour," interrupted Cleveland.

"No, no—damn it, no," replied Halcro; "no such thing—you put me out in my story—where was I?"

"Nay, the devil help you to the latitude," said the Captain, extricating his button from the gripe of the

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unmerciful bard's finger and thumb, "for I have no time to take an observation." So saying, he bolted from the room.

"A silly, ill-bred, conceited fool," said Halcro, looking after him; "with as little manners as wit in his empty coxcomb. I wonder what Magnus and these silly wenches can see in him—he tells such damnable long-winded stories, too, about his adventures and sea-fights—every second word a lie, I doubt not. Mordaunt, my dear boy, take example by that man—that is, take warning by him—never tell long stories about yourself. You are sometimes given to talk too much about your own exploits on crags and skerries, and the like, which only breaks conversation, and prevents other folk from being heard. Now I see you are impatient to hear out what I was saying—Stop, whereabouts was I?"

"I fear we must put it off, Mr. Halcro, until after dinner," said Mordaunt, who also meditated his escape, though desirous of effecting it with more delicacy towards his old acquaintance than Captain Cleveland had thought it necessary to use.

"Nay, my dear boy," said Halcro, seeing himself about to be utterly deserted, "do not you leave me too—never take so bad an example as to set light by old acquaintance, Mordaunt. I have wandered many a weary step in my day; but they were always lightened when I could get hold of the arm of an old friend like yourself."

So saying, he quitted the youth's coat, and, sliding his hand gently under his arm, grappled him more effectually; to which Mordaunt submitted, a little moved by the poet's observation upon the unkindness of old acquaintances, under which he himself was an immediate sufferer. But

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when Halcro renewed his formidable question, "Whereabouts was I?" Mordaunt, preferring his poetry to his prose, reminded him of the song which he said he had written upon his first leaving Zetland,—a song to which, indeed, the inquirer was no stranger, but which, as it must be new to the reader, we shall here insert as a favourable specimen of the poetical powers of this tuneful descendant of Haco the Golden-mouthed; for, in the opinion of many tolerable judges, he held a respectable rank among the inditers of madrigals of the period, and was as well qualified to give immortality to his Nancies of the hills or dales, as many a gentle sonnetteer of wit and pleasure about town. He was something of a musician also, and on the present occasion seized upon a sort of lute, and, quitting his victim, prepared the instrument for an accompaniment, speaking all the while that he might lose no time.

"I learned the lute," he said, "from the same man who taught honest Shadwell—plump Tom, as they used to call him—somewhat roughly treated by the glorious John, you remember—Mordaunt, you remember—

> 'Methinks I see the new Arion sail,
> The lute still trembling underneath thy nail;
> At thy well-sharpen'd thumb, from shore to shore,
> The trebles squeak for fear, the basses roar.'

Come, I am indifferently in tune now—what was it to be?—ay, I remember—nay, The Lass of Northmaven is the ditty—poor Bet Stimbister! I have called her Mary in the verses. Betsy does well for an English song; but Mary is more natural here." So saying, after a short prelude, he sung, with a tolerable voice and some taste, the following verses:—

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MARY.

"Farewell to Northmaven,
Gray Hillswicke, farewell!
To the calms of thy haven,
The storms on thy fell—
To each breeze that can vary
The mood of thy main,
And to thee, bonny Mary!
We meet not again.

"Farewell the wild ferry,
Which Hacon could brave,
When the peaks of the Skerry
Were white in the wave.
There's a maid may look over
These wild waves in vain—
For the skiff of her lover—
He comes not again.

"The vows thou hast broke,
On the wild currents fling them;
On the quicksand and rock
Let the mermaidens sing them.
New sweetness they'll give her
Bewildering strain;
But there's one who will never
Believe them again.

"Oh were there an island,
Though ever so wild,
Where woman could smile, and
No man be beguiled—
Too tempting a snare
To poor mortals were given,
And the hope would fix there,
That should anchor on heaven!"

"I see you are softened, my young friend," said Halcro, when he had finished his song; "so are most who hear that same ditty. Words and music both mine own; and without saying much of the wit of it, there is a sort of

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eh—eh—simplicity and truth about it, which gets its way to most folk's heart. Even your father cannot resist it—and he has a heart as impenetrable to poetry and song as Apollo himself could draw an arrow against. But then he has had some ill luck in his time with the women-folk, as is plain from his owing them such a grudge.—Ay, ay, there the charm lies—none of us but has felt the same sore in our day. But come, my dear boy, they are mustering in the hall, men and women both—plagues as they are, we should get on ill without them—but before we go, only mark the last turn—

'And the hope would fix there,'—

that is, in the supposed island—a place which neither was nor will be—

'That should anchor on heaven.'

Now you see, my good young man, there are here none of your heathenish rants, which Rochester, Etheridge, and these wild fellows, used to string together. A parson might sing the song, and his clerk bear the burden—but there is the confounded bell—we must go now—but never mind—we'll get into a quiet corner at night, and I'll tell you all about it."

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CHAPTER XIII.

Full in the midst the polish'd table shines,
And the bright goblets, rich with generous wines;
Now each partakes the feast, the wine prepares,
Portions the food, and each the portion shares;
Nor till the rage of thirst and hunger ceased,
To the high host approach'd the sagacious guest.

ODYSSEY.

THE hospitable profusion of Magnus Troil's board, the number of guests who feasted in the hall, the much greater number of retainers, attendants, humble friends, and domestics of every possible description, who revelled without, with the multitude of the still poorer, and less honoured assistants, who came from every hamlet or township within twenty miles round, to share the bounty of the munificent Udaller, were such as altogether astonished Triptolemus Yellowley, and made him internally doubt whether it would be prudent in him at this time, and amid the full glow of his hospitality, to propose to the host who presided over such a splendid banquet, a radical change in the whole customs and usages of his country.

True, the sagacious Triptolemus felt conscious that he possessed in his own person wisdom far superior to that of all the assembled feasters, to say nothing of the landlord, against whose prudence the very extent of his hospitality formed, in Yellowley's opinion, sufficient evidence. But yet the Amphitryon with whom one dines, holds, for

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the time at least, an influence over the minds of his most distinguished guests; and if the dinner be in good style, and the wines of the right quality, it is humbling to see that neither art nor wisdom, scarce external rank itself, can assume their natural and wonted superiority over the distributor of these good things, until coffee has been brought in. Triptolemus felt the full weight of this temporary superiority, yet he was desirous to do something that might vindicate the vaunts he had made to his sister and his fellow-traveller, and he stole a look at them from time to time, to mark whether he was not sinking in their esteem from postponing his promised lecture on the enormities of Zetland.

But Mrs. Barbara was busily engaged in noting and registering the waste incurred in such an entertainment as she had probably never before looked upon, and in admiring the host's indifference to, and the guests' absolute negligence of, those rules of civility in which her youth had been brought up. The feasters desired to be helped from a dish which was unbroken, and might have figured at supper, with as much freedom as if it had undergone the ravages of half-a-dozen guests; and no one seemed to care—the landlord himself least of all—whether those dishes only were consumed, which, from their nature, were incapable of re-appearance, or whether the assault was extended to the substantial rounds of beef, pasties, and so forth, which, by the rules of good housewifery, were destined to stand two attacks, and which, therefore, according to Mrs. Barbara's ideas of politeness, ought not to have been annihilated by the guests upon the first onset, but spared, like Outis in the cave of Polyphemus, to be devoured the last. Lost in the meditations to which these breaches of convivial discipline gave rise, and in the con-

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templation of an ideal larder of cold meat which she could have saved out of the wreck of roast, boiled, and baked, sufficient to have supplied her cupboard for at least a twelvemonth, Mrs. Barbara cared very little whether or not her brother supported in its extent the character which he had calculated upon assuming.

Mordaunt Mertoun also was conversant with far other thoughts, than those which regarded the proposed reformer of Zetland enormities. His seat was betwixt two blithe maidens of Thule, who, not taking scorn that he had upon other occasions given preference to the daughters of the Udaller, were glad of the chance which assigned to them the attentions of so distinguished a gallant, who, as being their squire at the feast, might in all probability become their partner in the subsequent dance. But, whilst rendering to his fair neighbours all the usual attentions which society required, Mordaunt kept up a covert, but accurate and close observation, upon his estranged friends, Minna and Brenda. The Udaller himself had a share of his attention; but in him he could remark nothing, except the usual tone of hearty and somewhat boisterous hospitality, with which he was accustomed to animate the banquet upon all such occasions of general festivity. But in the differing mien of the two maidens there was much more room for painful remark.

Captain Cleveland sat betwixt the sisters, was sedulous in his attentions to both, and Mordaunt was so placed, that he could observe all, and hear a great deal, of what passed between them. But Cleveland's peculiar regard seemed devoted to the elder sister. Of this the younger was perhaps conscious, for more than once her eye glanced towards Mordaunt, and, as he thought, with something in it which resembled regret for the interruption of their inter-

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course, and a sad remembrance of former and more friendly times; while Minna was exclusively engrossed by the attentions of her neighbour; and that it should be so, filled Mordaunt with surprise and resentment.

Minna, the serious, the prudent, the reserved, whose countenance and manners indicated so much elevation of character—Minna, the lover of solitude, and of those paths of knowledge in which men walk best without company—the enemy of light mirth, the friend of musing melancholy, and the frequenter of fountain-heads and pathless glens—she whose character seemed, in short, the very reverse of that which might be captivated by the bold, coarse, and daring gallantry of such a man as this Captain Cleveland, gave, nevertheless, her eye and ear to him, as he sat beside her at table, with an interest and a graciousness of attention, which, to Mordaunt, who well knew how to judge of her feelings by her manner, intimated a degree of the highest favour. He observed this, and his heart rose against the favourite by whom he had been thus superseded, as well as against Minna's indiscreet departure from her own character.

"What is there about the man," he said within himself, "more than the bold and daring assumption of importance which is derived from success in petty enterprises, and the exercise of petty despotism over a ship's crew?—His very language is more professional than is used by the superior officers of the British navy; and the wit which has excited so many smiles, seems to me such as Minna would not formerly have endured for an instant. Even Brenda seems less taken with his gallantry than Minna, whom it should have suited so little."

Mordaunt was doubly mistaken in these his angry speculations. In the first place, with an eye which was, in

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some respects, that of a rival, he criticised far too severely the manners and behaviour of Captain Cleveland. They were unpolished, certainly; which was of the less consequence in a country inhabited by so plain and simple a race as the ancient Zetlanders. On the other hand, there was an open, naval frankness in Cleaveland's bearing—much natural shrewdness—some appropriate humour—an undoubting confidence in himself—and that enterprising hardihood of disposition, which, without any other recommendable quality, very often leads to success with the fair sex. But Mordaunt was farther mistaken, in supposing that Cleveland was likely to be disagreeable to Minna Troil, on account of the opposition of their characters in so many material particulars. Had his knowledge of the world been a little more extensive, he might have observed, that as unions are often formed betwixt couples differing in complexion and stature, they take place still more frequently betwixt persons totally differing in feelings, in taste, in pursuits, and in understanding; and it would not be saying, perhaps, too much, to aver, that two thirds of the marriages around us have been contracted betwixt persons, who, judging *à priori*, we should have thought, had scarce any charms for each other.

A moral and primary cause might be easily assigned for these anomalies, in the wise dispensations of Providence, that the general balance of wit, wisdom, and amiable qualities of all kinds, should be kept up through society at large. For, what a world were it, if the wise were to intermarry only with the wise, the learned with the learned, the amiable with the amiable, nay, even the handsome with the handsome? and, is it not evident, that the degraded castes of the foolish, the ignorant, the brutal, and the deformed, (comprehending, by the way, far the

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greater portion of mankind,) must, when condemned to exclusive intercourse with each other, become gradually as much brutalized in person and disposition as so many ourang-outangs? When, therefore, we see the "gentle joined to the rude," we may lament the fate of the suffering individual, but we must not the less admire the mysterious disposition of that wise Providence which thus balances the moral good and evil of life;—which secures for a family, unhappy in the dispositions of one parent, a share of better and sweeter blood, transmitted from the other, and preserves to the offspring the affectionate care and protection of at least one of those from whom it is naturally due. Without the frequent occurrence of such alliances and unions—missorted as they seem at first sight—the world could not be that for which Eternal Wisdom has designed it—a place of mixed good and evil—a place of trial at once, and of suffering, where even the worst ills are checkered with something that renders them tolerable to humble and patient minds, and where the best blessings carry with them a necessary alloy of imbittering depreciation.

When, indeed, we look a little closer on the causes of those unexpected and ill-suited attachments, we have occasion to acknowledge, that the means by which they are produced do not infer that complete departure from, or inconsistency with, the character of the parties, which we might expect when the result alone is contemplated. The wise purposes which Providence appears to have had in view, by permitting such intermixture of dispositions, tempers, and understandings, in the married state, are not accomplished by any mysterious impulse by which, in contradiction to the ordinary laws of nature, men or women are urged to an union with those whom the world

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see to be unsuitable to them. The freedom of will is permitted to us in the occurrences of ordinary life, as in our moral conduct; and in the former as well as the latter case, is often the means of misguiding those who possess it. Thus it usually happens more especially to the enthusiastic and imaginative, that having formed a picture of admiration in their own mind, they too often deceive themselves by some faint resemblance in some existing being, whom their fancy, as speedily as gratuitously, invests with all the attributes necessary to complete the *beau idéal* of mental perfection. No one perhaps, even in the happiest marriage, with an object really beloved, ever discovered by experience all the qualities he expected to possess; but in far too many cases, he finds he has practised a much higher degree of mental deception, and has erected his airy castle of felicity upon some rainbow, which owed its very existence only to the peculiar state of the atmosphere.

Thus, Mordaunt, if better acquainted with life, and with the course of human things, would have been little surprised that such a man as Cleveland, handsome, bold, and animated,—a man who had obviously lived in danger, and who spoke of it as sport, should have been invested, by a girl of Minna's fanciful character, with an extensive share of those qualities, which, in her active imagination, were held to fill up the accomplishments of a heroic character. The plain bluntness of his manner, if remote from courtesy, appeared at least as widely different from deceit; and, unfashioned as he seemed by forms, he had enough both of natural sense, and natural good-breeding, to support the delusion he had created, at least as far as externals were concerned. It is scarce necessary to add, that these observations apply exclusively to what are

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called love-matches; for when either party fix their attachment upon the substantial comforts of a rental, or a jointure, they cannot be disappointed in the acquisition, although they may be cruelly so in their over-estimation of the happiness it was to afford, or in having too slightly anticipated the disadvantages with which it was to be attended.

Having a certain partiality for the dark Beauty whom we have described, we have willingly dedicated this digression, in order to account for a line of conduct which we allow to seem absolutely unnatural in such a narrative as the present, though the most common event in ordinary life; namely, in Minna's appearing to have over-estimated the taste, talent, and ability of a handsome young man, who was dedicating to her his whole time and attention, and whose homage rendered her the envy of almost all the other young women of that numerous party. Perhaps, if our fair readers will take the trouble to consult their own bosoms, they will be disposed to allow, that the distinguished good taste exhibited by any individual, who, when his attentions would be agreeable to a whole circle of rivals, selects *one* as their individual object, entitles him, on the footing of reciprocity, if on no other, to a large share of that individual's favourable, and even partial, esteem. At any rate, if the character shall, after all, be deemed inconsistent and unnatural, it concerns not us, who record the facts as we find them, and pretend no privilege for bringing closer to nature those incidents which may seem to diverge from it; or for reducing to consistence that most inconsistent of all created things,—the heart of a beautiful and admired female.

Necessity, which teaches all the liberal arts, can render us also adepts in dissimulation; and Mordaunt, though a

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novice, failed not to profit in her school. It was manifest, that, in order to observe the demeanour of those on whom his attention was fixed, he must needs put constraint on his own, and appear, at least, so much engaged with the damsels betwixt whom he sat, that Minna and Brenda should suppose him indifferent to what was passing around him. The ready cheerfulness of Maddie and Clara Groatsettars, who were esteemed considerable fortunes in the island, and were at this moment too happy in feeling themselves seated somewhat beyond the sphere of vigilance influenced by their aunt, the good old Lady Glowrowrum, met and requited the attempts which Mordaunt made to be lively and entertaining; and they were soon engaged in a gay conversation, to which, as usual on such occasions, the gentleman contributed wit, or what passes for such, and the ladies their prompt laughter and liberal applause. But, amidst this seeming mirth, Mordaunt failed not, from time to time, as covertly as he might, to observe the conduct of the two daughters of Magnus; and still it appeared as if the elder, wrapt up in the conversation of Cleveland, did not cast away a thought on the rest of the company; and as if Brenda, more openly as she conceived his attention withdrawn from her, looked with an expression both anxious and melancholy towards the group of which he himself formed a part. He was much moved by the diffidence, as well as the trouble, which her looks seemed to convey, and tacitly formed the resolution of seeking a more full explanation with her in the course of the evening. Norna, he remembered, had stated that these two amiable young women were in danger, the nature of which she left unexplained, but which he suspected to arise out of their mistaking the tharacter of this daring and all-engrossing stranger; and

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he secretly resolved, that, if possible, he would be the means of detecting Cleveland, and of saving his early friends.

As he revolved these thoughts, his attention to the Miss Groatsettars gradually diminished, and perhaps he might altogether have forgotten the necessity of his appearing an uninterested spectator of what was passing, had not the signal been given for the ladies retiring from table. Minna, with a native grace, and somewhat of stateliness in her manner, bent her head to the company in general, with a kinder and more particular expression as her eye reached Cleveland. Brenda, with the blush which attended her slightest personal exertion when exposed to the eyes of others, hurried through the same departing salutation with an embarrassment which almost amounted to awkwardness, but which her youth and timidity rendered at once natural and interesting. Again Mordaunt thought that her eye distinguished him amongst the numerous company. For the first time he ventured to encounter and to return the glance; and the consciousness that he had done so doubled the glow of Brenda's countenance, while something resembling displeasure was blended with her emotion.

When the ladies had retired, the men betook themselves to the deep and serious drinking, which, according to the fashion of the times, preceded the evening exercise of the dance. Old Magnus himself, by precept and example, exhorted them "to make the best use of their time, since the ladies would soon summon them to shake their feet." At the same time giving the signal to a gray-headed domestic, who stood behind him in the dress of a Dantzic skipper, and who added to many other occupations that of butler, "Eric Scambester," he said, "has

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the good ship the Jolly Mariner of Canton, got her cargo on board?"

"Chokeful loaded," answered the Ganymede of Burgh-Westra, "with good Nantz, Jamaica sugar, Portugal lemons, not to mention nutmeg and toast, and water taken in from the Shellicoat spring."

Loud and long laughed the guests at this stated and regular jest betwixt the Udaller and his butler, which always served as a preface to the introduction of a punch bowl of enormous size, the gift of the captain of one of the Honourable East India Company's vessels, which, bound from China homeward, had been driven north-about by stress of weather into Lerwick-bay, and had there contrived to get rid of part of the cargo, without very scrupulously reckoning for the King's duties.

Magnus Troil, having been a large customer, besides otherwise obliging Captain Coolie, had been remunerated, on the departure of the ship, with this splendid vehicle of conviviality, at the very sight of which, as old Eric Scambester bent under its weight, a murmur of applause ran through the company. The good old toasts dedicated to the prosperity of Zetland, were then honoured with flowing bumpers. "Death to the head that never wears hair!" was a sentiment quaffed to the success of the fishing, as proposed by the sonorous voice of the Udaller. Claud Halcro proposed with general applause, "The health of their worthy landmaster, the sweet sister meat-mistresses; health to man, death to fish, and growth to the produce of the ground." The same recurring sentiment was proposed more concisely by a whiteheaded compeer of Magnus Troil, in the words, "God open the mouth of the gray fish, and keep his hand about the corn!" *

* See Hibbert's Description of the Zetland Islands, p. 470.

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Full opportunity was afforded to all to honour these interesting toasts. Those nearest the capacious Mediterranean of punch, were accommodated by the Udaller with their portions, dispensed in huge rummer glasses by his own hospitable hand, whilst they who sat at a greater distance replenished their cups by means of a rich silver flagon, facetiously called the Pinnace; which, filled occasionally at the bowl, served to dispense its liquid treasures to the more remote parts of the table, and occasioned many right merry jests on its frequent voyages. The commerce of the Zetlanders with foreign vessels, and homeward-bound West Indiamen, had early served to introduce among them the general use of the generous beverage, with which the Jolly Mariner of Canton was loaded; nor was there a man in the archipelago of Thule more skilled in combining its rich ingredients, than old Eric Scambester, who indeed was known far and wide through the isles, by the name of the Punch-maker, after the fashion of the ancient Norwegians, who conferred on Rollo the Walker, and other heroes of their strain, epithets expressive of the feats of strength or dexterity in which they excelled all other men.

The good liquor was not slow in performing its office of exhilaration, and as the revel advanced, some ancient Norse drinking-songs were sung with great effect by the guests, tending to show, that if, from want of exercise, the martial virtues of their ancestors had decayed among the Zetlanders, they could still actively and intensely enjoy so much of the pleasures of Valhalla as consisted in quaffing the oceans of mead and brown ale, which were promised by Odin to those who should share his Scandinavian paradise. At length, excited by the cup and song, the diffident grew bold, and the modest loquacious

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—all became desirous of talking, and none were willing to listen—each man mounted his own special hobby-horse, and began eagerly to call on his neighbours to witness his agility. Amongst others, the little bard, who had now got next to our friend Mordaunt Mertoun, evinced a positive determination to commence and conclude, in all its longitude and latitude, the story of his introduction to glorious John Dryden; and Triptolemus Yellowley, as his spirits arose, shaking off a feeling of involuntary awe, with which he was impressed by the opulence indicated in all he saw around him, as well as by the respect paid to Magnus Troil by the assembled guests, began to broach, to the astonished and somewhat offended Udaller, some of those projects for ameliorating the islands, which he had boasted of to his fellow-travellers upon their journey of the morning.

But the innovations which he suggested, and the reception which they met with at the hand of Magnus Troil, must be told in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER XIV.

> We'll keep our customs—what is law itself,
> But old establish'd custom? What religion,
> (I mean, with one-half of the men that use it,)
> Save the good use and wont that carries them
> To worship how and where their fathers worshipp'd?
> All things resolve in custom—we'll keep ours.
>
> OLD PLAY

WE left the company of Magnus Troil engaged in high wassail and revelry. Mordaunt, who, like his father, shunned the festive cup, did not partake in the cheerfulness which the Ship diffused among the guests as they unloaded it, and the Pinnace, as it circumnavigated the table. But, in low spirits as he seemed, he was the more meet prey for the story-telling Halcro, who had fixed upon him, as in a favourable state to play the part of listener, with something of the same instinct that directs the hooded crow to the sick sheep among the flock, which will most patiently suffer itself to be made a prey of. Joyfully did the poet avail himself of the advantages afforded by Mordaunt's absence of mind, and unwillingness to exert himself in measures of active defence. With the unfailing dexterity peculiar to prosers, he contrived to dribble out his tale to double its usual length, by the exercise of the privilege of unlimited digressions; so that the story, like a horse on the *grand pas*, seemed to be advancing with rapidity, while, in reality, it scarce

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was progressive at the rate of a yard in the quarter of an hour. At length, however, he had discussed, in all its various bearings and relations, the history of his friendly landlord, the master-fashioner in Russel Street, including a short sketch of five of his relations, and anecdotes of three of his principal rivals, together with some general observations upon the dress and fashion of the period; and having marched thus far through the environs and outworks of his story, he arrived at the body of the place, for so the Wits' Coffeehouse might be termed. He paused on the threshold, however, to explain the nature of his landlord's right occasionally to intrude himself into this well-known temple of the Muses.

"It consisted," said Halcro, "in the two principal points, of bearing and forbearing; for my friend Thimblethwaite was a person of wit himself, and never quarrelled with any jest which the wags who frequented that house were flinging about, like squibs and crackers on a rejoicing night; and then, though some of the wits—ay, and I daresay the greater number, might have had some dealings with him in the way of trade, he never was the person to put any man of genius in unpleasant remembrance of such trifles. And though, my dear young Master Mordaunt, you may think this is but ordinary civility, because in this country it happens seldom that there is either much borrowing or lending, and because, praised be Heaven, there are neither bailiffs nor sheriff-officers to take a poor fellow by the neck, and because there are no prisons to put him into when they have done so, yet, let me tell you, that such a lamb-like forbearance as that of my poor, dear, deceased landlord, Thimblethwaite, is truly uncommon within the London bills of mortality. I could tell you of such things that have

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happened even to myself, as well as others, with these cursed London tradesmen, as would make your hair stand on end.—But what the devil has put old Magnus into such note? he shouts as if he were trying his voice against a north-west gale of wind."

Loud indeed was the roar of the old Udaller, as, worn out of patience by the schemes of improvement which the factor was now undauntedly pressing upon his consideration, he answered him, (to use an Ossianic phrase,) like a wave upon a rock.

"Trees, Sir Factor—talk not to me of trees! I care not though there never be one on the island, tall enough to hang a coxcomb upon. We will have no trees but those that rise in our havens—the good trees that have yards for boughs, and standing rigging for leaves."

"But touching the draining of the lake of Braebaster, whereof I spoke to you, Master Magnus Troil," answered the persevering agriculturist, "whilk I opine would be of so much consequence, there are two ways,—down the Linklater glen, or by the Scalmester burn. Now, having taken the level of both——"

"There is a third way, Master Yellowley," answered the landlord.

"I profess I can see none," replied Triptolemus, with as much good faith as a joker could desire in the subject of his wit, "in respect that the hill called Braebaster on the south, and ane high bank on the north, of whilk I cannot carry the name rightly in my head——"

"Do not tell us of hills and banks, Master Yellowley—there is a third way of draining the loch, and it is the only way that shall be tried in my day. You say my Lord Chamberlain and I are the joint proprietors—so be it—let each of us start an equal proportion of brandy,

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lime-juice, and sugar, into the loch—a ship's cargo or two will do the job—let us assemble all the jolly Udallers of the country, and in twenty-four hours you shall see dry ground where the loch of Braebaster now is."

A loud laugh of applause, which for a time actually silenced Triptolemus, attended a jest so very well suited to time and place—a jolly toast was given—a merry song was sung—the Ship unloaded her sweets—the Pinnace made its genial rounds—the duet betwixt Magnus and Triptolemus, which had attracted the attention of the whole company from its superior vehemence, now once more sunk, and merged into the general hum of the convivial table, and the poet Halcro again resumed his usurped possession of the ear of Mordaunt Mertoun.

"Whereabouts was I?" he said, with a tone which expressed to his weary listener more plainly than words could, how much of his desultory tale yet remained to be told. "Oh, I remember—we were just at the door of the Wits' Coffeehouse—it was set up by one——"

"Nay, but, my dear Master Halcro," said his hearer, somewhat impatiently, "I am desirous to hear of your meeting with Dryden."

"What, with glorious John?—true—ay—where was I? At the Wits' Coffeehouse—Well, in at the door we got—the waiters, and so forth, staring at me; for as to Thimblethwaite, honest fellow, his was a well-known face. —I can tell you a story about that——"

"Nay, but John Dryden," said Mordaunt, in a tone which deprecated farther digression.

"Ay, ay, glorious John—where was I?—Well, as we stood close by the bar, where one fellow sat grinding of coffee, and another putting up tobacco into penny parcels —a pipe and a dish cost just a penny—then and there it

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was that I had the first peep of him. One Dennis sat near him, who——"

"Nay, but John Dryden—what like was he?" demanded Mordaunt.

"Like a little fat old man, with his own gray hair, and in a full-trimmed black suit, that sat close as a glove. Honest Thimblethwaite let no one but himself shape for glorious John, and he had a slashing hand at a sleeve, I promise you—But there is no getting a mouthful of common sense spoken here—d—n that Scotchman, he and old Magnus are at it again!"

It was very true; and although the interruption did not resemble a thunder-clap, to which the former stentorian exclamation of the Udaller might have been likened, it was a close and clamorous dispute, maintained by question, answer, retort, and repartee, as closely huddled upon each other as the sounds which announce from a distance a close and sustained fire of musketry.

"Hear reason, sir?" said the Udaller; "we will hear reason, and speak reason too; and if reason falls short, you shall have rhyme to boot.—Ha, my little friend Halcro!"

Though cut off in the middle of his best story, (if that could be said to have a middle which had neither beginning nor end,) the bard bristled up at the summons, like a corps of light infantry, when ordered up to the support of the grenadiers, looked smart, slapped the table with his hand, and denoted his becoming readiness to back his hospitable landlord, as becomes a well-entertained guest. Triptolemus was a little daunted at this reinforcement of his adversary; he paused, like a cautious general, in the sweeping attack which he had commenced on the peculiar usages of Zetland, and spoke not again until the Udaller

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poked him with the insulting query, "Where is your reason now, Master Yellowley, that you were deafening me with a moment since?"

"Be but patient, worthy sir," replied the agriculturist; "what on earth can you or any other man say in defence of that thing you call a plough, in this blinded country? Why, even the savage Highlandmen, in Caithness and Sutherland, can make more work, and better, with their gascromh, or whatever they call it."

"But what ails you at it, sir?" said the Udaller; "let me hear your objections to it. It tills our land, and what would ye more?"

"It hath but one handle or stilt," replied Triptolemus.

"And who the devil," said the poet, aiming at something smart, "would wish to need a pair of stilts, if he can manage to walk with a single one?"

"Or tell me," said Magnus Troil, "how it were possible for Neil of Lupness, that lost one arm by his fall from the crag of Nekbreckan, to manage a plough with two handles?"

"The harness is of raw seal-skin," said Triptolemus.

"It will save dressed leather," answered Magnus Troil.

"It is drawn by four wretched bullocks," said the agriculturist, "that are yoked breast-fashion; and two women must follow this unhappy instrument, and complete the furrows with a couple of shovels."

"Drink about, Master Yellowley," said the Udaller; "and, as you say in Scotland, 'never fash your thumb.' Our cattle are too high-spirited to let one go before the other; our men are too gentle and well-nurtured to take the working-field without the women's company; our ploughs till our land—our land bears us barley; we brew

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our ale, eat our bread, and make strangers welcome to their share of it. Here's to you Master Yellowley."

This was said in a tone meant to be decisive of the question; and, accordingly, Halcro whispered to Mordaunt, "That has settled the matter, and now we will get on with glorious John.—There he sat in his suit of full-trimmed black; two years due was the bill, as mine honest landlord afterwards told me,—and such an eye in his head!—none of your burning, blighting, falcon eyes, which we poets are apt to make a rout about,—but a soft, full, thoughtful, yet penetrating glance—never saw the like of it in my life, unless it were little Stephen Kleancogg's, the fiddler, at Papastow, who——"

"Nay, but John Dryden?" said Mordaunt, who, for want of better amusement, had begun to take a sort of pleasure in keeping the old gentleman to his narrative, as men herd in a restive sheep, when they wish to catch him. He returned to his theme, with his usual phrase of "Ay, true—glorious John—Well, sir, he cast his eye, such as I have described it, on my landlord, and 'Honest Tim,' said he, 'what hast thou got here?' and all the wits, and lords, and gentlemen, that used to crowd round him, like the wenches round a pedlar at a fair, they made way for us, and up we came to the fireside, where he had his own established chair,—I have heard it was carried to the balcony in summer, but it was by the fireside when I saw it, —so up came Tim Thimblethwaite, through the midst of them, as bold as a lion, and I followed with a small parcel under my arm, which I had taken up partly to oblige my landlord, as the shop porter was not in the way, and partly that I might be thought to have something to do there, for you are to think there was no admittance at the Wits' for strangers who had no business there.—I have

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heard that Sir Charles Sedley said a good thing about that——"

"Nay, but you forget glorious John," said Mordaunt.

"Ay, glorious you may well call him. They talk of their Blackmore, and Shadwell, and such like,—not fit to tie the latchets of John's shoes—'Well,' he said to my landlord, 'what have you got there?' and he, bowing, I warrant, lower than he would to a duke, said he had made bold to come and show him the stuff which Lady Elizabeth had chose for her night-gown.—'And which of your geese is that, Tim, who has got it tucked under his wing?'—'He is an Orkney goose, if it please you, Mr. Dryden,' said Tim, who had wit at will, 'and he hath brought you a copy of verses for your honour to look at.'—'Is he amphibious?' said glorious John, taking the paper,—and methought I could rather have faced a battery of cannon than the crackle it gave as it opened, though he did not speak in a way to dash one neither;—and then he looked at the verses, and he was pleased to say, in a very encouraging way indeed, with a sort of good-humoured smile on his face, and certainly for a fat elderly gentleman,—for I would not compare it to Minna's smile, or Brenda's,—he had the pleasantest smile I ever saw,—'Why, Tim,' he said, 'this goose of yours will prove a swan on our hands.' With that he smiled a little, and they all laughed, and none louder than those who stood too far off to hear the jest; for every one knew when he smiled there was something worth laughing at, and so took it upon trust; and the word passed through among the young Templars, and the wits, and the smarts, and there was nothing but question on question who we were; and one French fellow was trying to tell them it was only Monsieur Tim Thimblethwaite; but he made

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such work with his Dumbletate and Timbletate, that I thought his explanation would have lasted——"

"As long as your own story," thought Mordaunt; but the narrative was at length finally cut short, by the strong and decided voice of the Udaller.

"I will hear no more on it, Mr. Factor," he exclaimed.

"At least let me say something about the breed of horses," said Yellowley, in rather a cry-mercy tone of voice. "Your horses, my dear sir, resemble cats in size, and tigers in devilry?"

"For their size," said Magnus, "they are the easier for us to get off and on them—[as Triptolemus experienced this morning, thought Mordaunt to himself]—and, as for their devilry, let no one mount them that cannot manage them."

A twinge of self-conviction, on the part of the agriculturist, prevented him from reply. He darted a deprecatory glance at Mordaunt, as if for the purpose of imploring secrecy respecting his tumble; and the Udaller, who saw his advantage, although he was not aware of the cause, pursued it with the high and stern tone proper to one who had all his life been unaccustomed to meet with, and unapt to endure, opposition.

"By the blood of St. Magnus the Martyr," he said, "but you are a fine fellow, Master Factor Yellowley! You come to us from a strange land, understanding neither our laws, nor our manners, nor our language, and you propose to become governor of the country, and that we should all be your slaves!"

"My pupils, worthy sir, my pupils!" said Yellowley, "and that only for your own proper advantage."

"We are too old to go to school," said the Zetlander. "I tell you once more, we will sow and reap our grain as

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our fathers did—we will eat what God sends us, with our doors open to the stranger, even as theirs were open. If there is aught imperfect in our practice, we will amend it in time and season; but the blessed Baptist's holiday was made for light hearts and quick heels. He that speaks a word more of reason, as you call it, or any thing that looks like it, shall swallow a pint of sea-water—he shall, by this hand!—and so fill up the good ship, the Jolly Mariner of Canton, once more, for the benefit of those that will stick by her; and let the rest have a fling with the fiddlers, who have been summoning us this hour. I will warrant every wench is on tiptoe by this time. Come, Mr. Yellowley, no unkindness, man—why, man, thou feelest the rolling of the Jolly Mariner still"—(for, in truth, honest Triptolemus showed a little unsteadiness of motion, as he rose to attend his host)—"but never mind, we shall have thee find thy land-legs to reel it with yonder bonny belles. Come along, Triptolemus—let me grapple thee fast, lest thou *trip*, old Triptolemus—ha, ha, ha!"

So saying, the portly though weatherbeaten hulk of the Udaller sailed off like a man-of-war that had braved a hundred gales, having his guest in tow like a recent prize. The greater part of the revellers followed their leader with loud jubilee, although there were several stanch topers, who, taking the option left them by the Udaller, remained behind to relieve the Jolly Mariner of a fresh cargo, amidst many a pledge to the health of their absent landlord, and to the prosperity of his roof-tree, with whatsoever other wishes of kindness could be devised, as an apology for another pint-bumper of noble punch.

The rest soon thronged the dancing-room, an apartment which partook of the simplicity of the time and of the

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country. Drawing-rooms and saloons were then unknown in Scotland, save in the houses of the nobility, and of course absolutely so in Zetland; but a long, low, anomalous store-room, sometimes used for the deposition of merchandise, sometimes for putting aside lumber, and a thousand other purposes, was well known to all the youth of Dunrossness, and of many a district besides, as the scene of the merry dance, which was sustained with so much glee when Magnus Troil gave his frequent feasts.

The first appearance of this ball-room might have shocked a fashionable party, assembled for the quadrille or the waltz. Low as we have stated the apartment to be, it was but imperfectly illuminated by lamps, candles, ship-lanterns, and a variety of other *candelabra*, which served to throw a dusky light upon the floor, and upon the heaps of merchandise and miscellaneous articles which were piled around; some of them stores for the winter; some, goods destined for exportation; some, the tribute of Neptune, paid at the expense of shipwrecked vessels, whose owners were unknown; some, articles of barter received by the proprietor, who, like most others at the period, was somewhat of a merchant as well as a landholder, in exchange for the fish, and other articles, the produce of his estate. All these, with the chests, boxes, casks, &c., which contained them, had been drawn aside, and piled one above the other, in order to give room for the dancers, who, light and lively as if they had occupied the most splendid saloon in the parish of St. James's, executed their national dances with equal grace and activity.

The group of old men who looked on, bore no inconsiderable resemblance to a party of aged tritons, engaged in beholding the sports of the sea-nymphs; so hard a look

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had most of them acquired by contending with the elements, and so much did the shaggy hair and beards, which many of them cultivated after the ancient Norwegian fashion, give their heads the character of these supposed natives of the deep. The young people, on the other hand, were uncommonly handsome, tall, well-made, and shapely; the men, with long fair hair, and, until broken by the weather, a fresh ruddy complexion, which, in the females, was softened into a bloom of infinite delicacy. Their natural good ear for music qualified them to second to the utmost the exertions of a band, whose strains were by no means contemptible; while the elders, who stood around, or sat quiet upon the old sea-chests, which served for chairs, criticised the dancers, as they compared their execution with their own exertions in former days; or, warmed by the cup and flagon, which continued to circulate among them, snapped their fingers, and beat time with their feet to the music.

Mordaunt looked upon this scene of universal mirth with the painful recollection, that he, thrust aside from his pre-eminence, no longer exercised the important duties of chief of the dancers, or office of leader of the revels, which had been assigned to the stranger Cleveland. Anxious, however, to suppress the feelings of his own disappointment, which he felt it was neither wise to entertain nor manly to display, he approached his fair neighbours to whom he had been so acceptable at table, with the purpose of inviting one of them to become his partner in the dance. But the awfully ancient old lady, even the Lady Glowrowrum, who had only tolerated the exuberance of her nieces' mirth during the time of dinner, because her situation rendered it then impossible for her to interfere, was not disposed to permit the apprehended

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renewal of the intimacy implied in Mertoun's invitation. She therefore took upon herself, in the name of her two nieces, who sat pouting beside her in displeased silence, to inform Mordaunt, after thanking him for his civility, that the hands of her nieces were engaged for that evening; and, as he continued to watch the party at a little distance, he had an opportunity of being convinced that the alleged engagement was a mere apology to get rid of him, when he saw the two good-humoured sisters join the dance under the auspices of the next young men who asked their hands. Incensed at so marked a slight, and unwilling to expose himself to another, Mordaunt Mertoun drew back from the circle of dancers, shrouded himself amongst the mass of inferior persons who crowded into the bottom of the room as spectators, and there, concealed from the observation of others, digested his own mortification as well as he could—that is to say, very ill—and with all the philosophy of his age—that is to say, with none at all.

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CHAPTER XV.

A torch for me—let wantons, light of heart,
Tickle the useless rushes with their heels;
For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase—
I'll be a candle-holder, and look on.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE youth, says the moralist Johnson, cares not for the boy's hobby-horse, nor the man for the youth's mistress; and therefore the distress of Mordaunt Mertoun, when excluded from the merry dance, may seem trifling to many of my readers, who would, nevertheless, think they did well to be angry if deposed from their usual place in an assembly of a different kind. There lacked not amusement, however, for those whom the dance did not suit, or who were not happy enough to find partners to their liking. Halcro, now completely in his element, had assembled round him an audience, to whom he was declaiming his poetry with all the enthusiasm of glorious John himself, and receiving in return the usual degree of applause allowed to minstrels who recite their own rhymes—so long at least as the author is within hearing of the criticism. Halcro's poetry might indeed have interested the antiquary as well as the admirer of the Muses, for several of his pieces were translations or imitations from the Scaldic sagas, which continued to be sung by the fishermen of these islands even until a very late period; insomuch, that when Gray's poems first

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found their way to Orkney, the old people recognised at once, in the ode of the "Fatal Sisters," the Runic rhymes which had amused or terrified their infancy under the title of the "Magicians," and which the fishers of North Ronaldshaw, and other remote isles, used still to sing when asked for a Norse ditty.*

Half-listening, half-lost in his own reflections, Mordaunt Mertoun stood near the door of the apartment, and in the outer ring of the little circle formed around old Halcro, while the bard chanted to a low, wild, monotonous air, varied only by the efforts of the singer to give interest and emphasis to particular passages, the following imitation of a Northern war-song:—

THE SONG OF HAROLD HARFAGER.

The sun is rising dimly red,
The wind is wailing low and dread,
From his cliff the eagle sallies,
Leaves the wolf his darksome valleys;
In the mist the ravens hover,
Peep the wild-dogs from the cover,
Screaming, croaking, baying, yelling,
Each in his wild accents telling,
"Soon we feast on dead and dying,
Fair-hair'd Harold's flag is flying."

Many a crest in air is streaming,
Many a helmet darkly gleaming,
Many an arm the axe uprears,
Doom'd to hew the wood of spears.
All along the crowded ranks,
Horses neigh and armour clanks;
Chiefs are shouting, clarions ringing,
Louder still the bard is singing,
"Gather, footmen,—gather, horsemen,
To the field, ye valiant Norsemen!

* See Note, page 36.

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"Halt ye not for food or slumber,
View not vantage, count not number;
Jolly reapers, forward still;
Grow the crop on vale or hill,
Thick or scatter'd, stiff or lithe,
It shall down before the scythe.
Forward with your sickles bright,
Reap the harvest of the fight—
Onward, footmen,—onward, horsemen,
To the charge, ye gallant Norsemen!

"Fatal Choosers of the Slaughter,
O'er you hovers Odin's daughter;
Hear the voice she spreads before ye,—
Victory, and wealth, and glory;
Or old Valhalla's roaring hail,
Her ever-circling mead and ale,
Where for eternity unite
The joys of wassail and of fight.
Headlong forward, foot and horsemen,
Charge and fight, and die like Norsemen!"

"The poor unhappy blinded heathens!" said Triptolemus, with a sigh deep enough for a groan; "they speak of their eternal cups of ale, and I question if they kend how to manage a croft land of grain!"

"The cleverer fellows they, neighbour Yellowley," answered the poet, "if they made ale without barley."

"Barley!—alack-a-day!" replied the more accurate agriculturist, "who ever heard of barley in these parts? Bear, my dearest friend, bear is all they have, and wonderment it is to me that they ever see an awn of it. Ye scart the land with a bit thing ye ca' a pleugh—ye might as weel give it a ritt with the teeth of a redding-kame. Oh, to see the sock, and the heel, and the sole-clout of a real steady Scottish pleugh, with a chield like a Samson between the stilts, laying a weight on them would keep down a mountain; twa stately owsen, and as many broad-

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breasted horse in the traces, going through soil and till, and leaving a fur in the ground would carry off water like a causeyed syver! They that have seen a sight like that, have seen something to crack about in another sort, than those unhappy auld-warld stories of war and slaughter, of which the land has seen even but too mickle, for a' your singing and soughing awa in praise of such blood-thirsty doings, Master Claud Halcro."

"It is a heresy," said the animated little poet, bridling and drawing himself up, as if the whole defence of the Orcadian Archipelago rested on his single arm—"It is a heresy so much as to name one's native country, if a man is not prepared when and how to defend himself—ay, and to annoy another. The time has been, that if we made not good ale and aquavitæ, we knew well enough where to find that which was ready made to our hand; but now the descendants of Sea-kings, and Champions, and Berserkars, are become as incapable of using their swords, as if they were so many women. Ye may praise them for a strong pull on an oar, or a sure foot on a skerry; but what else could glorious John himself say of ye, my good Hialtlanders, that any man would listen to?"

"Spoken like an angel, most noble poet," said Cleveland, who, during an interval of the dance, stood near the party in which this conversation was held. "The old champions you talked to us about yesternight, were the men to make a harp ring—gallant fellows that were friends to the sea, and enemies to all that sailed on it. Their ships, I suppose, were clumsy enough; but if it is true that they went upon the account as far as the Levant, I scarce believe that ever better fellows unloosed a topsail."

"Ay," replied Halcro, "there you spoke them right.

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In those days none could call their life and means of living their own, unless they dwelt twenty miles out of sight of the blue sea. Why, they had public prayers put up in every church in Europe, for deliverance from the ire of the Northmen. In France and England, ay, and in Scotland, too, for as high as they hold their head now-a-days, there was not a bay or a haven, but it was freer to our forefathers than to the poor devils of natives; and now we cannot, forsooth, so much as grow our own barley without Scottish help"—(here he darted a sarcastic glance at the factor)—"I would I saw the time we were to measure arms with them again."

"Spoken like a hero once more," said Cleveland.

"Ah!" continued the little bard, "I would it were possible to see our barks, once the water-dragons of the world, swimming with the black raven standard waving at the topmast, and their decks glimmering with arms, instead of being heaped up with stockfish—winning with our fearless hands what the niggard soil denies—paying back all old scorn and modern injury—reaping where we never sowed, and felling what we never planted—living and laughing through the world, and smiling when we were summoned to quit it!"

So spoke Claud Halcro, in no serious, or at least most certainly in no sober mood, his brain (never the most stable) whizzing under the influence of fifty well remembered sagas, besides five bumpers of usquebaugh and brandy; and Cleveland, between jest and earnest, clapped him on the shoulder, and again repeated, "Spoken like a hero!"

"Spoken like a fool, I think," said Magnus Troil, whose attention had been also attracted by the vehemence of the little bard—"where would you cruize upon, or

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against whom?—we are all subjects of one realm, I trow, and I would have you to remember, that your voyage may bring up at Execution-dock. I like not the Scots—no offence, Mr. Yellowley—that is, I would like them well enough if they would stay quiet in their own land, and leave us at peace with our own people, and manners, and fashions; and if they would but abide there till I went to harry them like a mad old Berserkar, I would leave them in peace till the day of judgment. With what the sea sends us, and the land lends us, as the proverb says, and a set of honest neighbourly folks to help us to consume it, so help me, Saint Magnus, as I think we are even but too happy!"

"I know what war is," said an old man, "and I would as soon sail through Sumburgh-roost in a cockleshell, or in a worse loom, as I would venture there again."

"And pray, what wars knew your valour?" said Halcro, who, though forbearing to contradict his landlord from a sense of respect, was not a whit inclined to abandon his argument to any meaner authority.

"I was pressed," answered the old Triton, "to serve under Montrose, when he came here about the sixteen hundred and fifty one, and carried a sort of us off, will ye nill ye, to get our throats cut in the wilds of Strathnavern *—I shall never forget it—we had been hard put to it for victuals—what would I have given for a luncheon of Burgh-Westra beef—ay, or a mess of sour sillocks?—When our Highlandmen brought in a dainty drove of

* Montrose, in his last and ill-advised attempt to invade Scotland, augmented his small army of Danes and Scottish Royalists, by some bands of raw troops, hastily levied, or rather pressed into his service, in the Orkney and Zetland Isles, who, having little heart either to the cause or manner of service, behaved but indifferently when they came into action.

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kyloes, much ceremony there was not, for we shot and felled, and flayed, and roasted, and broiled, as it came to every man's hand; till, just as our beards were at the greasiest, we heard—God preserve us—a tramp of horse, then twa or three drapping shots,—then came a full salvo, —and then, when the officers were crying on us to stand, and maist of us looking which way we might run away, down they broke, horse and foot, with old John Urry, or Hurry,* or whatever they call him—he hurried us that day, and worried us to boot—and we began to fall as thick as the stots that we were felling five minutes before."

"And Montrose," said the soft voice of the graceful Minna; "what became of Montrose, or how looked he?"

"Like a lion with the hunters before him," answered the old gentleman; "but I looked not twice his way, for my own lay right over the hill."

"And so you left him?" said Minna, in a tone of the deepest contempt.

"It was no fault of mine, Mistress Minna," answered the old man, somewhat out of countenance; "but I was there with no choice of my own; and, besides, what good could I have done?—all the rest were running like sheep, and why should I have staid?"

"You might have died with him," said Minna.

* Here, as afterwards remarked in the text, the Zetlander's memory deceived him grossly. Sir John Urry, a brave soldier of fortune, was at that time in Montrose's army, and made prisoner along with him. He had changed so often that the mistake is pardonable. After the action, he was executed by the Covenanters; and

"Wind-changing Warwick then could change no more."

Strachan commanded the body by which Montrose was routed.

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"And lived with him to all eternity, in immortal verse!" added Claud Halcro.

"I thank you, Mistress Minna," replied the plain-dealing Zetlander; "and I thank you, my old friend Claud;—but I would rather drink both your healths in this good bicker of ale, like a living man as I am, than that you should be making songs in my honour, for having died forty or fifty years agone. But what signified it,—run or fight, 'twas all one;—they took Montrose, poor fellow, for all his doughty deeds, and they took me that did no doughty deeds at all; and they hanged him, poor man, and as for me——"

"I trust in Heaven they flogged and pickled you," said Cleveland, worn out of patience with the dull narrative of the peaceful Zetlander's poltroonery, of which he seemed so wondrous little ashamed.

"Flog horses, and pickle beef," said Magnus; "why, you have not the vanity to think, that, with all your quarterdeck airs, you will make poor old neighbour Haagen ashamed that he was not killed some scores of years since? You have looked on death yourself, my doughty young friend, but it was with the eyes of a young man who wishes to be thought of; but we are a peaceful people,—peaceful, that is, as long as any one should be peaceful, and that is, till some one has the impudence to wrong us, or our neighbours; and then, perhaps, they may not find our northern blood much cooler in our veins than was that of the old Scandinavians that gave us our names and lineage.—Get ye along, get ye along to the sword-dance,* that the strangers that are amongst us may

* The Sword-Dance is celebrated in general terms by Olaus Magnus. He seems to have considered it as peculiar to the Norwegians, from whom it may have passed to the Orkneymen and Zetlanders, with other northern customs.

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see that our hands and our weapons are not altogether unacquainted even yet."

A dozen cutlasses, selected hastily from an old arm-chest, and whose rusted hue bespoke how seldom they left the sheath, armed the same number of young Zet-

"Of their Dancing in Arms.

"Moreover, the northern Goths and Swedes had another sport to exercise youth withall, that they will dance and skip amongst naked swords and dangerous weapons: And this they do after the manner of masters of defence, as they are taught from their youth by skilful teachers, that dance before them, and sing to it. And this play is showed especially about Shrovetide, called in Italian *Mascharurum*. For, before carnivals, all the youth dance for eight days together, holding their swords up, but within the scabbards, for three times turning about; and then they do it with their naked swords lifted up. After this, turning more moderately, taking the points and pummels one of the other, they change ranks, and place themselves in an triagonal figure, and this they call *Rosam;* and presently they dissolve it by drawing back their swords and lifting them up, that upon every one's head there may be made a square Rosa, and then by a most nimbly whisking their swords about collaterally, they quickly leap back, and end the sport, which they guide with pipes or songs, or both together; first by a more heavy, then by a more vehement, and lastly, by a most vehement dancing. But this speculation is scarce to be understood but by those who look on, how comely and decent it is, when at one word, or one commanding, the whole armed multitude is directed to fall to fight, and clergymen may exercise themselves, and mingle themselves amongst others at this sport, because it is all guided by most wise reason."

To the Primate's account of the sword-dance, I am able to add the words sung or chanted, on occasion of this dance, as it is still performed in Papa Stour, a remote island of Zetland, where alone the custom keeps its ground. It is, it will be observed by antiquaries, a species of play or mystery, in which the Seven Champions of Christendom make their appearance, as in the interlude presented in "All's Well that Ends Well." This dramatic curiosity was most kindly procured for my use by Dr. Scott of Hazlar Hospital, son of my friend Mr. Scott of Newbie, Zetland. Mr. Hibbert has, in his Description of the Zetland Islands, given an account of the sword-dance, but somewhat less full than the following:—

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landers, with whom mingled six maidens, led by Minna Troil; and the minstrelsy instantly commenced a tune appropriate to the ancient Norwegian war-dance, the evolutions of which are perhaps still practised in those remote islands.

"WORDS USED AS A PRELUDE TO THE SWORD-DANCE, A DANISH OR NORWEGIAN BALLET, COMPOSED SOME CENTURIES AGO, AND PRESERVED IN PAPA STOUR, ZETLAND.

PERSONÆ DRAMATIS.*

(*Enter* MASTER, *in the character of* ST. GEORGE.)

Brave gentles all within this boor,†
If ye delight in any sport,
Come see me dance upon this floor,
Which to you all shall yield comfort.
Then shall I dance in such a sort,
As possible I may or can;
You, minstrel man, play me a Porte,‡
That I on this floor may prove a man.

(*He bows, and dances in a line.*)

Now have I danced with heart and hand,
Brave gentles all, as you may see,
For I have been tried in many a land,
As yet the truth can testify;
In England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Italy, and Spain,
Have I been tried with that good sword of steel.

(*Draws, and flourishes.*)

Yet, I deny that ever a man did make me yield;
For in my body there is strength,
As by my manhood may be seen;
And I, with that good sword of length,
Have oftentimes in perils been,
And over champions I was king.
And by the strength of this right hand,
Once on a day I kill'd fifteen,
And left them dead upon the land.
Therefore, brave minstrel, do not care,

* So placed in the old MS.

† *Boor*—so spelt to accord with the vulgar pronunciation of the word *bower*.

‡ *Porte*—so spelt in the original. The word is known as indicating a piece of music on the bagpipe, to which ancient instrument, which is of Scandinavian origin, the sword-dance may have been originally composed.

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The first movement was graceful and majestic, the youths holding their swords erect, and without much gesture; but the tune, and the corresponding motions of

But play to me a Porte most light,
That I no longer do forbear,
But dance in all these gentles' sight;
Although my strength makes you abased,
Brave gentles all, be not afraid,
For here are six champions, with me, staid,
All by my manhood I have raised.
(*He dances.*)
Since I have danced. I think it best
To call my brethren in your sight,
That I may have a little rest,
And they may dance with all their might;
With heart and hand as they are knights,
And shake their sword of steel so bright,
And show their main strength on this floor,
For we shall have another bout
Before we pass out of this boor,
Therefore, brave minstrel, do not care
To play to me a Porte most light,
That I no longer do forbear,
But dance in all these gentles' sight.
(*He dances, and then introduces his knights as under.*)
Stout James of Spain, both tried and stour,*
Thine acts are known full well indeed;
And champion Dennis, a French knight,
Who stout and bold is to be seen;
And David, a Welshman born.
Who is come of noble blood;
And Patrick also, who blew the horn,
An Irish knight amongst the wood.
Of Italy, brave Anthony the good,
And Andrew of Scotland King;
St. George of England, brave indeed,
Who to the Jews wrought muckle tinte.†
Away with this!—Let us come to sport,
Since that ye have a mind to war,
Since that ye have this bargain sought,
Come let us fight and do not fear.
Therefore, brave minstrel, do not care
To play to me a Porte most light,

* *Stour*—great.
† *Muckle tinte*, much loss or harm; so in MS.

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the dancers, became gradually more and more rapid,—they clashed their swords together, in measured time, with a spirit which gave the exercise a dangerous ap-

That I no longer do forbear,
But dance in all these gentles' sight.
(*He dances, and advances to* JAMES *of Spain.*)
Stout James of Spain, both tried and stour,
Thine acts are known full well indeed,
Present thyself within our sight,
Without either fear or dread.
Count not for favour or for feid,
Since of thy acts thou hast been sure;
Brave James of Spain, I will thee lead,
To prove thy manhood on this floor.
(JAMES *dances.*)
Brave champion Dennis, a French knight,
Who stout and bold is to be seen,
Present thyself here in our sight,
Thou brave French knight,
Who bold hast been;
Since thou such valiant acts hast done,
Come let us see some of them now
With courtesy, thou brave French knight,
Draw out thy sword of noble hue.
(DENNIS *dances, while the others retire to a side.*)
Brave David a bow must string, and with awe
Set up a wand upon a stand,
And that brave David will cleave in twa.*
(DAVID *dances solus.*)
Here is, I think, an Irish knight,
Who does not fear, or does not fright,
To prove thyself a valiant man,
As thou hast done full often bright;
Brave Patrick, dance, if that thou can.
(*He dances.*)
Thou stout Italian, come thou here;
Thy name is Anthony, most stout;
Draw out thy sword that is most clear,
And do thou fight without any doubt;
Thy leg thou shake, thy neck thou lout,†
And show some courtesy on this floor,

* Something is evidently amiss or omitted here. David probably exhibited some feat of archery.

† *Lout*—to bend or bow down, pronounced *loot*, as *doubt* is *doot* in Scotland.

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pearance in the eye of the spectator, though the firmness, justice, and accuracy, with which the dancers kept time with the stroke of their weapons, did, in truth, ensure its

For we shall have another bout,
Before we pass out of this boor.
Thou kindly Scotsman, come thou here;
Thy name is Andrew of Fair Scotland;
Draw out thy sword that is most clear,
Fight for thy king with thy right hand;
And aye as long as thou canst stand,
Fight for thy king with all thy heart;
And then, for to confirm his band,
Make all his enemies for to smart.—(*He dances.*)
(*Music begins.*)

FIGUIR.*

"The six stand in rank with their swords reclining on their shoulders. The Master (St. George) dances, and then strikes the sword of James of Spain, who follows George, then dances, strikes the sword of Dennis, who follows behind James. In like manner the rest—the music playing—swords as before. After the six are brought out of rank, they and the Master form a circle, and hold the swords point and hilt. This circle is danced round twice. The whole headed by the Master, pass under the swords held in a vaulted manner. They jump over the swords. This naturally places the swords across, which they disentangle by passing under their right sword. They take up the seven swords, and form a circle, in which they dance round.

"The Master runs under the sword opposite, which he jumps over backwards. The others do the same. He then passes under the right-hand sword, which the others follow, in which position they dance, until commanded by the Master, when they form into a circle, and dance round as before. They then jump over the right-hand sword, by which means their backs are to the circle, and their hands across their backs. They dance round in that form until the Master calls 'Loose,' when they pass under the right sword, and are in a perfect circle.

"The Master lays down his sword, and lays hold of the point of James's sword. He then turns himself, James, and the others, into a clew. When so formed, he passes under out of the midst of the circle; the others follow; they vault as before. After several other evolu-

* *Figuir*—so spelt in MS.

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safety. The most singular part of the exhibition was the courage exhibited by the female performers, who now, surrounded by the swordsmen, seemed like the Sabine maidens in the hands of their Roman lovers; now, moving under the arch of steel which the young men had formed, by crossing their weapons over the heads of their fair partners, resembled the band of Amazons when they first joined in the Pyrrhic dance with the followers of Theseus. But by far the most striking and appropriate figure was that of Minna Troil, whom Halcro had long since entitled the Queen of Swords, and who, indeed, moved amidst the swordsmen with an air, which seemed to hold all the drawn blades as the proper accompani-

tions, they throw themselves into a circle, with their arms across the breast. They afterwards form such figures as to form a shield of their swords, and the shield is so compact that the Master and his knights dance alternately with this shield upon their heads. It is then laid down upon the floor. Each knight lays hold of their former points and hilts with their hands across, which disentangle by figuirs directly contrary to those that formed the shield. This finishes the Ballet.

"EPILOGUE.

Mars does rule, he bends his brows,
He makes us all agast; *
After the few hours that we stay here,
Venus will rule at last.

Farewell, farewell, brave gentles all,
That herein do remain,
I wish you health and happiness
Till we return again.

[*Exeunt.*"

The manuscript from which the above was copied, was transcribed from *a very old one*, by Mr. William Henderson, Jun., of Papa Stour, in Zetland. Mr. Henderson's copy is not dated, but bears his own signature, and, from various circumstances, it is known to have been written about the year 1788.

* *Agast*—so spelt in MS.

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ments of her person, and the implements of her pleasure. And when the mazes of the dance became more intricate, when the close and continuous clash of the weapons made some of her companions shrink, and show signs of fear, her cheek, her lip, and her eye, seemed rather to announce, that, at the moment when the weapons flashed fastest, and rung sharpest around her, she was most completely self-possessed, and in her own element. Last of all, when the music had ceased, and she remained for an instant upon the floor by herself, as the rule of the dance required, the swordsmen and maidens, who departed from around her, seemed the guards and the train of some princess, who, dismissed by her signal, were leaving her for a time to solitude. Her own look and attitude, wrapped, as she probably was, in some vision of the imagination, corresponded admirably with the ideal dignity which the spectators ascribed to her; but, almost immediately recollecting herself, she blushed, as if conscious she had been, though but for an instant, the object of undivided attention, and gave her hand gracefully to Cleveland, who, though he had not joined in the dance, assumed the duty of conducting her to her seat.

As they passed, Mordaunt Mertoun might observe that Cleveland whispered into Minna's ear, and that her brief reply was accompanied with even more discomposure of countenance than she had manifested when encountering the gaze of the whole assembly. Mordaunt's suspicions were strongly awakened by what he observed, for he knew Minna's character well, and with what equanimity and indifference she was in the custom of receiving the usual compliments and gallantries with which her beauty and her situation rendered her sufficiently familiar.

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"Can it be possible she really loves this stranger?" was the unpleasant thought that instantly shot across Mordaunt's mind;—"And if she does, what is my interest in the matter?" was the second; and which was quickly followed by the reflection, that though he claimed no interest at any time but as a friend, and though that interest was now withdrawn, he was still, in consideration of their former intimacy, entitled both to be sorry and angry at her for throwing away her affections on one he judged unworthy of her. In this process of reasoning, it is probable that a little mortified vanity, or some indescribable shade of selfish regret, might be endeavouring to assume the disguise of disinterested generosity; but there is so much of base alloy in our very best (unassisted) thoughts, that it is melancholy work to criticise too closely the motives of our most worthy actions; at least we would recommend to every one to let those of his neighbours pass current, however narrowly he may examine the purity of his own.

The sword-dance was succeeded by various other specimens of the same exercise, and by songs, to which the singers lent their whole soul, while the audience were sure, as occasion offered, to unite in some favourite chorus. It is upon such occasions that music, though of a simple and even rude character, finds its natural empire over the generous bosom, and produces that strong excitement which cannot be attained by the most learned compositions of the first masters, which are caviare to the common ear, although, doubtless, they afford a delight, exquisite in its kind, to those whose natural capacity and education have enabled them to comprehend and relish those difficult and complicated combinations of harmony.

It was about midnight when a knocking at the door of

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the mansion, with the sound of the *Gue* and the *Langspiel*, announced, by their tinkling chime, the arrival of fresh revellers, to whom, according to the hospitable custom of the country, the apartments were instantly thrown open.

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CHAPTER XVI.

—— My mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE new comers were, according to the frequent custom of such frolickers all over the world, disguised in a sort of masquing habits, and designed to represent the Tritons and Mermaids with whom ancient tradition and popular belief have peopled the northern seas. The former, called by Zetlanders of that time, Shoupeltins, were represented by young men grotesquely habited, with false hair, and beards made of flax, and chaplets composed of sea-ware interwoven with shells, and other marine productions, with which also were decorated their light-blue or greenish mantles of wadmaal, repeatedly before mentioned. They had fish-spears, and other emblems of their assumed quality, amongst which the classical taste of Claud Halcro, by whom the masque was arranged, had not forgotten the conch-shells, which were stoutly and hoarsely winded, from time to time, by one or two of the aquatic deities, to the great annoyance of all who stood near them.

The Nereids and Water-nymphs who attended on this occasion, displayed, as usual, a little more taste and ornament than was to be seen amongst their male attendants. Fantastic garments of green silk, and other materials of

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superior cost and fashion, had been contrived, so as to imitate their idea of the inhabitants of the waters, and, at the same time, to show the shape and features of the fair wearers to the best advantage. The bracelets and shells, which adorned the neck, arms, and ankles of the pretty Mermaidens, were, in some cases, intermixed with real pearls; and the appearance, upon the whole, was such as might have done no discredit to the court of Amphitrite, especially when the long bright locks, blue eyes, fair complexions, and pleasing features of the maidens of Thule, were taken into consideration. We do not indeed pretend to aver, that any of these seeming Mermaids had so accurately imitated the real siren, as commentators have supposed those attendant on Cleopatra did, who, adopting the fish's train of their original, were able, nevertheless, to make their "bends," or "ends," (said commentators cannot tell which,) "adornings." * Indeed, had they not left their extremities in their natural state, it would have been impossible for the Zetland sirens to have executed the very pretty dance, with which they rewarded the company for the ready admission which had been granted to them.

It was soon discovered that these masquers were no strangers, but a part of the guests, who, stealing out a little time before, had thus disguised themselves, in order to give variety to the mirth of the evening. The muse of Claud Halcro, always active on such occasions, had supplied them with an appropriate song, of which we may give the following specimen. The song was alternate betwixt a Nereid or Mermaid, and a Merman or Triton —the males and females on either part forming a semi-

* See some admirable discussion on this passage, in the Variorum Shakspeare.

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chorus, which accompanied and bore burden to the principal singer.

I.

MERMAID.

Fathoms deep beneath the wave,
Stringing beads of glistering pearl,
Singing the achievements brave
Of many an old Norwegian earl;
Dwelling where the tempest's raving
Falls as light upon our ear,
As the sigh of lover, craving
Pity from his lady dear,
Children of wild Thule, we,
From the deep caves of the sea,
As the lark springs from the lea,
Hither come to share your glee.

II.

MERMAN.

From reining of the water-horse,
That bounded till the waves were foaming,
Watching the infant tempest's course,
Chasing the sea-snake in his roaming;
From winding charge-notes on the shell,
When the huge whale and sword-fish duel,
Or tolling shroudless seamen's knell
When the winds and waves are cruel;
Children of wild Thule, we
Have plough'd such furrows on the sea,
As the steer draws on the lea,
And hither we come to share your glee.

III.

MERMAIDS AND MERMEN.

We heard you in our twilight caves,
A hundred fathom deep below,
For notes of joy can pierce the waves,
That drown each sound of war and woe.

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Those who dwell beneath the sea
Love the sons of Thule well;
Thus, to aid your mirth, bring we
Dance, and song, and sounding shell.
Children of dark Thule, know,
Those who dwell by haaf and voe,
Where your daring shallops row,
Come to share the festal show.

The final chorus was borne by the whole voices, excepting those carrying the conch-shells, who had been trained to blow them in a sort of rude accompaniment, which had a good effect. The poetry, as well as the performance of the masquers, received great applause from all who pretended to be judges of such matters; but, above all, from Triptolemus Yellowley, who, his ear having caught the agricultural sounds of plough and furrow, and his brain being so well drenched, that it could only construe the words in their most literal acceptation, declared roundly, and called Mordaunt to bear witness, that, though it was a shame to waste so much good lint as went to form the Triton's beards and periwigs, the song contained the only words of common sense which he had heard all that long day.

But Mordaunt had no time to answer the appeal, being engaged in attending with the utmost vigilance to the motions of one of the female masquers, who had given him a private signal as they entered, which induced him, though uncertain who she might prove to be, to expect some communication from her of importance. The siren who had so boldly touched his arm, and had accompanied the gesture with an expression of eye which bespoke his attention, was disguised with a good deal more care than her sister-masquers, her mantle being loose, and wide enough to conceal her shape completely, and her face hid-

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den beneath a silk masque. He observed that she gradually detached herself from the rest of the masquers, and at length placed herself, as if for the advantage of the air, near the door of a chamber which remained open, looked earnestly at him again, and then, taking an opportunity when the attention of the company was fixed upon the rest of her party, she left the apartment.

Mordaunt did not hesitate instantly to follow his mysterious guide, for such we may term the masquer, as she paused to let him see the direction she was about to take, and then walked swiftly towards the shore of the *voe*, or salt-water lake, now lying full before them, its small summer-waves glistening and rippling under the influence of a broad moonlight, which, added to the strong twilight of those regions during the summer solstice, left no reason to regret the absence of the sun, the path of whose setting was still visible on the waves of the west, while the norizon on the east side was already beginning to glimmer with the lights of dawn.

Mordaunt had therefore no difficulty in keeping sight of his disguised guide, as she tripped it over height and hollow to the sea-side, and, winding among the rocks, led the way to the spot where his own labours, during the time of his former intimacy at Burgh-Westra, had constructed a sheltered and solitary seat, where the daughters of Magnus were accustomed to spend, when the weather was suitable, a good deal of their time. Here, then, was to be the place of explanation; for the masquer stopped, and, after a moment's hesitation, sat down on the rustic settle. But from the lips of whom was he to receive it? Norna had first occurred to him; but her tall figure and slow majestic step were entirely different from the size and gait of the more fairy-formed siren, who had

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preceded him with as light a trip as if she had been a real Nereid, who, having remained too late upon the shore, was, under the dread of Amphitrite's displeasure, hastening to regain her native element. Since it was not Norna, it could be only, he thought, Brenda, who thus singled him out; and when she had seated herself upon the bench, and taken the mask from her face, Brenda it accordingly proved to be. Mordaunt had certainly done nothing to make him dread her presence; and yet, such is the influence of bashfulness over the ingenuous youth of both sexes, that he experienced all the embarrassment of one who finds himself unexpectedly placed before a person who is justly offended with him. Brenda felt no less embarrassment; but as she had courted this interview, and was sensible it must be a brief one, she was compelled, in spite of herself, to begin the conversation.

"Mordaunt," she said, with a hesitating voice; then correcting herself, she proceeded—"You must be surprised, Mr. Mertoun, that I should have taken this uncommon freedom."

"It was not till this morning, Brenda," replied Mordaunt, "that any mark of friendship or intimacy from you or from your sister could have surprised me. I am far more astonished that you should shun me without reason for so many hours, than that you should now allow me an interview. In the name of Heaven, Brenda, in what have I offended you? or why are we on these unusual terms?"

"May it not be enough to say," replied Brenda, looking downward, "that it is my father's pleasure?"

"No, it is not enough," returned Mertoun. "Your father cannot have so suddenly altered his whole thoughts of me, and his whole actions towards me, without acting

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under the influence of some strong delusion. I ask you but to explain of what nature it is; for I will be contented to be lower in your esteem than the meanest hind in these islands, if I cannot show that his change of opinion is only grounded upon some infamous deception, or some extraordinary mistake."

"It may be so," said Brenda—"I hope it is so—that I do hope it is so, my desire to see you thus in private may well prove to you. But it is difficult—in short it is impossible for me to explain to you the cause of my father's resentment. Norna has spoken with him concerning it boldly, and I fear they parted in displeasure; and you well know no light matter could cause that."

"I have observed," said Mordaunt, "that your father is most attentive to Norna's counsel, and more complaisant to her peculiarities than to those of others—this I have observed, though he is no willing believer in the supernatural qualities to which she lays claim."

"They are related distantly," answered Brenda, "and were friends in youth—nay, as I have heard, it was once supposed they would have been married; but Norna's peculiarities showed themselves immediately on her father's death, and there was an end of that matter, if ever there was any thing in it. But it is certain my father regards her with much interest; and it is, I fear, a sign how deeply his prejudices respecting you must be rooted, since they have in some degree quarrelled on your account."

"Now, blessings upon you, Brenda, that you have called them prejudices," said Mertoun, warmly, and hastily—"a thousand blessings on you! You were ever gentle-hearted—you could not have maintained even the show of unkindness long."

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"It was indeed but a show," said Brenda, softening gradually into the familiar tone in which they had conversed from infancy; "I could never think, Mordaunt,—never, that is, seriously believe, that you could say aught unkind of Minna or of me."

"And who dares to say I have?" said Mordaunt, giving way to the natural impetuosity of his disposition—"Who dares to say that I have, and ventures at the same time to hope that I will suffer his tongue to remain in safety betwixt his jaws? By Saint Magnus the Martyr, I will feed the hawks with it!"

"Nay, now," said Brenda, "your anger only terrifies me, and will force me to leave you."

"Leave me," said he, "without telling either the calumny, or the name of the villainous calumniator!"

"Oh, there are more than one," answered Brenda, "that have possessed my father with an opinion—which I cannot myself tell you—but there are more than one who say——"

"Were they hundreds, Brenda, I will do no less to them than I have said—Sacred Martyr!—to accuse me of speaking unkindly of those whom I most respected and valued under Heaven—I will back to the apartment this instant, and your father shall do me right before all the world."

"Do not go, for the love of Heaven!" said Brenda; "do not go, as you would not render me the most unhappy wretch in existence!"

"Tell me then, at least, if I guess aright," said Mordaunt, "when I name this Cleveland for one of those who have slandered me?"

"No, no," said Brenda, vehemently, "you run from one error into another more dangerous. You say you are my

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friend;—I am willing to be yours:—be but still for a moment, and hear what I have to say;—our interview has lasted but too long already, and every additional moment brings additional danger with it."

"Tell me, then," said Mertoun, much softened by the poor girl's extreme apprehension and distress, "what it is that you require of me; and believe me, it is impossible for you to ask aught that I will not do my very uttermost to comply with."

"Well, then—this Captain," said Brenda, "this Cleveland——"

"I knew it, by Heaven!" said Mordaunt; "my mind assured me that that fellow was, in one way or other, at the bottom of all this mischief and misunderstanding."

"If you cannot be silent, and patient, for an instant," replied Brenda, "I must instantly quit you: what I meant to say had no relation to you, but to another,—in one word, to my sister Minna. I have nothing to say concerning her dislike to you, but an anxious tale to tell concerning his attention to her."

"It is obvious, striking, and marked," said Mordaunt; "and, unless my eyes deceive me, it is received as welcome, if, indeed, it is not returned."

"That is the very cause of my fear," said Brenda. "I, too, was struck with the external appearance, frank manners, and romantic conversation of this man."

"His appearance!" said Mordaunt; "he is stout and well-featured enough, to be sure; but, as old Sinclair of Quendale said to the Spanish admiral, 'Farcie on his face! I have seen many a fairer hang on the Boroughmoor.'—From his manners, he might be captain of a privateer; and by his conversation, the trumpeter to his own puppet-show; for he speaks of little else than his own exploits."

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"You are mistaken," answered Brenda; "he speaks but too well on all that he has seen and learned; besides, he has really been in many distant countries, and in many gallant actions, and he can tell them with as much spirit as modesty. You would think you saw the flash and heard the report of the guns. And he has other tones of talking too—about the delightful trees and fruits of distant climates; and how the people wear no dress, through the whole year, half so warm as our summer gowns, and, indeed, put on little except cambric and muslin."

"Upon my word, Brenda, he does seem to understand the business of amusing young ladies," replied Mordaunt.

"He does indeed," said Brenda, with great simplicity. "I assure you that, at first, I liked him better than Minna did; and yet, though she is so much cleverer than I am, I know more of the world than she does; for I have seen more of cities, having been once at Kirkwall; beside that, I was thrice at Lerwick, when the Dutch ships were there, and so I should not be very easily deceived in people."

"And pray, Brenda," said Mertoun, "what was it that made you think less favourably of this young fellow, who seems to be so captivating?"

"Why," said Brenda, after a moment's reflection, "at first he was much livelier; and the stories he told were not quite so melancholy, or so terrible; and he laughed and danced more."

"And, perhaps, at that time, danced oftener with Brenda than with her sister?" added Mordaunt.

"No—I am not sure of that," said Brenda; "and yet, to speak plain, I could have no suspicion of him at all while he was attending quite equally to us both; for you

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know that then he could have been no more to us than yourself, Mordaunt Mertoun, or young Swaraster, or any other young man in the islands."

"But why, then," said Mordaunt, "should you not see him, with patience, become acquainted with your sister? —He is wealthy, or seems to be so at least. You say he is accomplished and pleasant;—what else would you desire in a lover for Minna?"

"Mordaunt, you forget who we are," said the maiden, assuming an air of consequence, which sat as gracefully upon her simplicity, as did the different tone in which she had spoken hitherto. "This is a little world of ours, this Zetland, inferior, perhaps, in soil and climate to other parts of the earth, at least so strangers say; but it is our own little world, and we, the daughters of Magnus Troil, hold a first rank in it. It would, I think, little become us, who are descended from Sea-kings and Jarls, to throw ourselves away upon a stranger, who comes to our coast, like the eider-duck in spring, from we know not whence, and may leave it in autumn, to go we know not where."

"And who may ne'ertheless entice a Zetland golden-eye to accompany his migration," said Mertoun.

"I will hear nothing light on such a subject," replied Brenda, indignantly; "Minna, like myself, is the daughter of Magnus Troil, the friend of strangers, but the Father of Hialtland. He gives them the hospitality they need; but let not the proudest of them think that they can, at their pleasure, ally with his house."

She said this in a tone of considerable warmth, which she instantly softened, as she added, "No, Mordaunt, do not suppose that Minna Troil is capable of so far forgetting what she owes to her father and her father's blood, as to think of marrying this Cleveland; but she may lend an

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ear to him so long as to destroy her future happiness. She has that sort of mind, into which some feelings sink deeply;—you remember how Ulla Storlson used to go, day by day, to the top of Vossdalehead, to look for her lover's ship that was never to return? When I think of her slow step, her pale cheek, her eye that grew dimmer and dimmer, like the lamp that is half-extinguished for lack of oil,—when I remember the fluttered look, of something like hope, with which she ascended the cliff at morning, and the deep dead despair which sat on her forehead when she returned,—when I think on all this, can you wonder that I fear for Minna, whose heart is formed to entertain, with such deep-rooted fidelity, any affection that may be implanted in it?"

"I do not wonder," said Mordaunt, eagerly sympathizing with the poor girl; for, besides the tremulous expression of her voice, the light could almost show him the tear which trembled in her eye, as she drew the picture to which her fancy had assimilated her sister,—"I do not wonder that you should feel and fear whatever the purest affection can dictate; and if you can but point out to me in what I can serve your sisterly love, you shall find me as ready to venture my life, if necessary, as I have been to go out on the crag to get you the eggs of the guillemot; and, believe me, that whatever has been told to your father or yourself, of my entertaining the slightest thoughts of disrespect or unkindness, is as false as a fiend could devise."

"I believe it," said Brenda, giving him her hand; "I believe it, and my bosom is lighter, now I have renewed my confidence in so old a friend. How you can aid us, I know not; but it was by the advice, I may say by the commands, of Norna, that I have ventured to make this

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communication; and I almost wonder," she added, as she looked around her, "that I have had courage to carry me through it. At present you know all that I can tell you of the risk in which my sister stands. Look after this Cleveland—beware how you quarrel with him, since you must so surely come by the worst with an experienced soldier."

"I do not exactly understand," said the youth, "how that should so surely be. This I know, that with the good limbs and good heart that God hath given me, ay, and with a good cause to boot—I am little afraid of any quarrel which Cleveland can fix upon me."

"Then, if not for your own sake, for Minna's sake," said Brenda—"for my father's—for mine—for all our sakes, avoid any strife with him, but be contented to watch him, and, if possible, to discover who he is, and what are his intentions towards us. He has talked of going to Orkney, to inquire after the consort with whom he sailed; but day after day, and week after week passes, and he goes not; and while he keeps my father company over the bottle, and tells Minna romantic stories of foreign people, and distant wars, in wild and unknown regions, the time glides on, and the stranger, of whom we know nothing except that he is one, becomes gradually closer and more inseparably intimate in our society.—And now, farewell. Norna hopes to make your peace with my father, and entreats you not to leave Burgh-Westra to-morrow, however cold he and my sister may appear towards you. I too," she said, stretching her hand towards him, "must wear a face of cold friendship as towards an unwelcome visitor, but at heart we are still Brenda and Mordaunt. And now separate quickly, for we must not be seen together."

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She stretched her hand to him, but withdrew it in some slight confusion, laughing and blushing, when, by a natural impulse, he was about to press it to his lips. He endeavoured for a moment to detain her, for the interview had for him a degree of fascination, which, as often as he had before been alone with Brenda, he had never experienced. But she extricated herself from him, and again signing an adieu, and pointing out to him a path different from that which she was herself about to take, tripped towards the house, and was soon hidden from his view by the acclivity.

Mordaunt stood gazing after her in a state of mind, to which, as yet, he had been a stranger. The dubious neutral ground between love and friendship may be long and safely trodden, until he who stands upon it is suddenly called upon to recognise the authority of the one or the other power; and then it most frequently happens, that the party who for years supposed himself only to be a friend, finds himself at once transformed into a lover. That such a change in Mordaunt's feelings should take place from this date, although he himself was unable exactly to distinguish its nature, was to be expected. He found himself at once received, with the most unsuspicious frankness, into the confidence of a beautiful and fascinating young woman, by whom he had, so short a time before, imagined himself despised and disliked; and, if any thing could make a change, in itself so surprising and so pleasing, yet more intoxicating, it was the guileless and open-hearted simplicity of Brenda, that cast an enchantment over every thing which she did or said. The scene too might have had its effect, though there was little occasion for its aid. But a fair face looks yet fairer under the light of the moon, and a sweet voice sounds yet

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sweeter among the whispering sounds of a summer night. Mordaunt, therefore, who had by this time returned to the house, was disposed to listen with unusual patience and complacency to the enthusiastic declamation pronounced upon moon-light by Claud Halcro, whose ecstasies had been awakened on the subject by a short turn in the open air, undertaken to qualify the vapours of the good liquor, which he had not spared during the festival.

"The sun, my boy," he said, "is every wretched labourer's day-lantern—it comes glaring yonder, out of the east, to summon up a whole world to labour and to misery; whereas the merry moon lights all of us to mirth and to love."

"And to madness, or she is much belied," said Mordaunt, by way of saying something.

"Let it be so," answered Halcro, "so she does not turn us melancholy-mad.—My dear young friend, the folks of this painstaking world are far too anxious about possessing all their wits, or having them, as they say, about them. At least I know I have been often called half-witted, and I am sure I have gone through the world as well as if I had double the quantity. But stop—where was I? Oh, touching and concerning the moon—why, man, she is the very soul of love and poetry. I question if there was ever a true lover in existence who had not got at least as far as 'O thou,' in a sonnet in her praise."

"The moon," said the factor, who was now beginning to speak very thick, "ripens corn, at least the old folk said so—and she fills nuts also, whilk is of less matter—*sparge nuces pueri*."

"A fine, a fine," said the Udaller, who was now in his altitudes; "the factor speaks Greek—by the bones of

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my holy namesake, Saint Magnus, he shall drink off the yawl full of punch, unless he gives us a song on the spot!"

"Too much water drowned the miller," answered Triptolemus. "My brain has more need of draining than of being drenched with more liquor."

"Sing, then," said the despotic landlord, "for no one shall speak any other language here, save honest Norse, jolly Dutch, or Danske, or broad Scots, at the least of it. So, Eric Scambester, produce the yawl, and fill it to the brim, as a charge for demurrage."

Ere the vessel could reach the agriculturist, he, seeing it under way, and steering towards him by short tacks, (for Scambester himself was by this time not over steady in his course,) made a desperate effort, and began to chant, or rather to croak forth, a Yorkshire harvest-home ballad, which his father used to sing when he was a little mellow, and which went to the tune of "Hey Dobbin, away with the waggon." The rueful aspect of the singer, and the desperately discordant tones of his voice, formed so delightful a contrast with the jollity of the words and tune, that honest Triptolemus afforded the same sort of amusement which a reveller might give, by appearing on a festival-day in the holyday coat of his grandfather. The jest concluded the evening, for even the mighty and strongheaded Magnus himself had confessed the influence of the sleepy god. The guests went off as they best might, each to his separate crib and resting-place, and in a short time the mansion, which was of late so noisy, was hushed into perfect silence.

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CHAPTER XVII.

They man their boats, and all the young men arm,
With whatsoever might the monsters harm;
Pikes, halberds, spits, and darts, that wound afar,
The tools of peace, and implements of war.
Now was the time for vigorous lads to show
What love or honour could incite them to:—
A goodly theatre, where rocks are round
With reverend age and lovely lasses crown'd.

BATTLE OF THE SUMMER ISLANDS.

THE morning which succeeds such a feast as that of Magnus Troil, usually lacks a little of the zest which seasoned the revels of the preceding day, as the fashionable reader may have observed at a public breakfast during the race-week in a country town; for, in what is called the best society, these lingering moments are usually spent by the company, each apart in their own dressing-rooms. At Burgh-Westra, it will readily be believed, no such space for retirement was afforded; and the lasses, with their paler cheeks, the elder dames, with many a wink and yawn, were compelled to meet with their male companions (headaches and all) just three hours after they had parted from each other.

Eric Scambester had done all that man could do to supply the full means of diverting the ennui of the morning meal. The board groaned with rounds of hung beef, made after the fashion of Zetland—with pasties—with baked meats—with fish, dressed and cured in every pos-

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sible manner; nay, with the foreign delicacies of tea, coffee, and chocolate; for, as we have already had occasion to remark, the situation of these islands made them early acquainted with various articles of foreign luxury, which were, as yet, but little known in Scotland, where, at a much later period than that we write of, one pound of green tea was dressed like cabbage, and another converted into a vegetable sauce for salt beef, by the ignorance of the good housewives to whom they had been sent as rare presents.

Besides these preparations, the table exhibited whatever mighty potions are resorted to by *bons vivans*, under the facetious name of a "hair of the dog that bit you." There was the potent Irish Usquebaugh—right Nantz—genuine Schiedamm—Aquavitæ from Caithness—and golden Wasser from Hamburgh; there was rum of formidable antiquity, and cordials from the Leeward Islands. After these details, it were needless to mention the stout home-brewed ale—the German mum, and Schwartz-beer—and still more would it be beneath our dignity to dwell upon the innumerable sorts of pottage and flummery, together with the bland, and various preparations of milk, for those who preferred thinner potations.

No wonder that the sight of so much good cheer awakened the appetite and raised the spirits of the fatigued revellers. The young men began immediately to seek out their partners of the preceding evening, and to renew the small talk which had driven the night so merrily away; while Magnus, with his stout old Norse kindred, encouraged, by precept and example, those of elder days and graver mood, to a substantial flirtation with the good things before them. Still, however, there

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was a long period to be filled up before dinner; for the most protracted breakfast cannot well last above an hour; and it was to be feared that Claud Halcro meditated the occupation of this vacant morning with a formidable recitation of his own verses, besides telling, at its full length, the whole history of his introduction to glorious John Dryden. But fortune relieved the guests of Burgh-Westra from this threatened infliction, by sending them means of amusement peculiarly suited to their taste and habits.

Most of the guests were using their toothpicks, some were beginning to talk of what was to be done next, when, with haste in his step, fire in his eye, and a harpoon in his hand, Eric Scambester came to announce to the company, that there was a whale on shore, or nearly so, at the throat of the voe. Then you might have seen such a joyous, boisterous, and universal bustle, as only the love of sport, so deeply implanted in our nature, can possibly inspire. A set of country squires, about to beat for the first woodcocks of the season, were a comparison as petty, in respect to the glee, as in regard to the importance of the object; the battue, upon a strong cover in Ettrick Forest, for the destruction of the foxes; the insurrection of the sportsmen of the Lennox, when one of the Duke's deer gets out from Inch-Mirran; nay, the joyous rally of the fox-chase itself, with all its blithe accompaniments of hound and horn, fall infinitely short of the animation with which the gallant sons of Thule set off to encounter the monster, whom the sea had sent for their amusement at so opportune a conjuncture.

The multifarious stores of Burgh-Westra were rummaged hastily for all sorts of arms, which could be used on such an occasion. Harpoons, swords, pikes, and hal-

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berds, fell to the lot of some; others contented themselves with hay-forks, spits, and whatever else could be found, that was at once long and sharp. Thus hastily equipped, one division, under the command of Captain Cleveland, hastened to man the boats which lay in the little haven, while the rest of the party hurried by land to the scene of action.

Poor Triptolemus was interrupted in a plan, which he, too, had formed against the patience of the Zetlanders, and which was to have consisted in a lecture upon the agriculture, and the capabilities of the country, by this sudden hubbub, which put an end at once to Halcro's poetry, and to his no less formidable prose. It may be easily imagined, that he took very little interest in the sport which was so suddenly substituted for his lucubrations, and he would not even have deigned to have looked upon the active scene which was about to take place, had he not been stimulated thereunto by the exhortations of Mistress Baby. "Pit yoursell forward, man," said that provident person, "pit yoursell forward—wha kens where a blessing may light?—they say that a' men share and share equals-aquals in the creature's ulzie, and a pint o't wad be worth siller, to light the cruize in the lang dark nights that they speak of. Pit yoursell forward, man—there's a graip to ye—faint heart never wan fair lady—wha kens but what, when its fresh, it may eat weel eneugh, and spare butter?"

What zeal was added to Triptolemus's motions, by the prospect of eating fresh train-oil instead of butter, we know not; but, as better might not be, he brandished the rural implement (a stable-fork) with which he was armed, and went down to wage battle with the whale.

The situation in which the enemy's ill-fate had placed

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him, was particularly favourable to the enterprise of the islanders. A tide of unusual height had carried the animal over a large bar of sand, into the voe or creek in which he was now lying. So soon as he found the water ebbing, he became sensible of his danger, and had made desperate efforts to get over the shallow water where the waves broke on the bar; but hitherto he had rather injured than mended his condition, having got himself partly aground, and lying therefore particularly exposed to the meditated attack. At this moment the enemy came down upon him. The front ranks consisted of the young and hardy, armed in the miscellaneous manner we have described; while, to witness and animate their efforts, the young women, and the elderly persons of both sexes, took their place among the rocks, which overhung the scene of action.

As the boats had to double a little headland, ere they opened the mouth of the voe, those who came by land to the shores of the inlet, had time to make the necessary reconnoissances upon the force and situation of the enemy, on whom they were about to commence a simultaneous attack by land and sea.

This duty, the stout-hearted and experienced general, for so the Udaller might be termed, would intrust to no eyes but his own; and, indeed, his external appearance, and his sage conduct, rendered him alike qualified for the command which he enjoyed. His gold-laced hat was exchanged for a bearskin cap, his suit of blue broadcloth, with its scarlet lining, and loops, and frogs of bullion, had given place to a red flannel jacket, with buttons of black horn, over which he wore a seal-skin shirt curiously seamed and plaited on the bosom, such as are used by the Esquimaux, and sometimes by the Greenland whale-

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fishers. Sea-boots of a formidable size completed his dress, and in his hand he held a large whaling-knife, which he brandished, as if impatient to employ it in the operation of *flinching* the huge animal which lay before them,—that is, the act of separating its flesh from its bones. Upon closer examination, however, he was obliged to confess, that the sport to which he had conducted his friends, however much it corresponded with the magnificent scale of his hospitality, was likely to be attended with its own peculiar dangers and difficulties.

The animal, upwards of sixty feet in length, was lying perfectly still, in a deep part of the voe into which it had weltered, and where it seemed to await the return of tide, of which it was probably assured by instinct. A council of experienced harpooners was instantly called, and it was agreed that an effort should be made to noose the tail of this torpid leviathan, by casting a cable around it, to be made fast by anchors to the shore, and thus to secure against his escape, in case the tide should make before they were able to despatch him. Three boats were destined to this delicate piece of service, one of which the Udaller himself proposed to command, while Cleveland and Mertoun were to direct the two others. This being decided, they sat down on the strand, waiting with impatience until the naval part of the force should arrive in the voe. It was during this interval that Triptolemus Yellowley, after measuring with his eyes the extraordinary size of the whale, observed, that in his poor mind, "A wain with six owsen, or with sixty owsen either, if they were the owsen of the country, could not drag siccan a huge creature from the water, where it was now lying, to the sea-beach."

Trifling as this remark may seem to the reader, it was

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connected with a subject which always fired the blood of the old Udaller, who, glancing upon Triptolemus a quick and stern look, asked him what the devil it signified, supposing a hundred oxen could not drag the whale upon the beach? Mr. Yellowley, though not much liking the tone with which the question was put, felt that his dignity and his profit compelled him to answer as follows:—"Nay, sir—you know yoursell, Master Magnus Troil, and every one knows that knows any thing, that whales of siccan size as may not be masterfully dragged on shore by the instrumentality of one wain with six owsen, are the right and property of the Admiral, who is at this time the same noble lord who is, moreover, Chamberlain of these isles."

"And I tell you, Mr. Triptolemus Yellowley," said the Udaller, "as I would tell your master if he were here, that every man who risks his life to bring that fish ashore, shall have an equal share and partition, according to our ancient and loveable Norse custom and wont; nay, if there is so much as a woman looking on, that will but touch the cable, she will be partner with us; ay, and more than all that, if she will but say there is a reason for it, we will assign a portion to the babe that is unborn."

The strict principle of equity which dictated this last arrangement, occasioned laughter among the men, and some slight confusion among the women. The factor, however, thought it shame to be so easily daunted. "*Suum cuique tribuito*," said he; "I will stand for my lord's right and my own."

"Will you?" replied Magnus; "then by the Martyr's bones, you shall have no law of partition but that of God and Saint Olave, which we had before either factor, or

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treasurer, or chamberlain was heard of!—All shall share that lend a hand, and never a one else. So you, Master Factor, shall be busy as well as other folk, and think yourself lucky to share like other folk. Jump into that boat," (for the boats had by this time pulled round the headland,) "and you, my lads, make way for the factor in the stern-sheets—he shall be the first man this blessed day that shall strike the fish."

The loud authoritative voice, and the habit of absolute command inferred in the Udaller's whole manner, together with the conscious want of favourers and backers amongst the rest of the company, rendered it difficult for Triptolemus to evade compliance, although he was thus about to be placed in a situation equally novel and perilous. He was still, however, hesitating, and attempting an explanation, with a voice in which anger was qualified by fear, and both thinly disguised under an attempt to be jocular, and to represent the whole as a jest, when he heard the voice of Baby maundering in his ear,—"Wad he lose his share of the ulzie, and the lang Zetland winter coming on, when the lightest day in December is not so clear as a moonless night in the Mearns?"

This domestic instigation, in addition to those of fear of the Udaller, and shame to seem less courageous than others, so inflamed the agriculturist's spirits, that he shook his *graip* aloft, and entered the boat with the air of Neptune himself, carrying on high his trident.

The three boats destined for this perilous service, now approached the dark mass, which lay like an islet in the deepest part of the voe, and suffered them to approach without showing any sign of animation. Silently, and with such precaution as the extreme delicacy of the operation required, the intrepid adventurers, after the failure

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of their first attempt, and the expenditure of considerable time, succeeded in casting a cable around the body of the torpid monster, and in carrying the ends of it ashore, when an hundred hands were instantly employed in securing them. But ere this was accomplished, the tide began to make fast, and the Udaller informed his assistants, that either the fish must be killed, or at least greatly wounded ere the depth of water on the bar was sufficient to float him; or that he was not unlikely to escape from their joint prowess.

"Wherefore," said he, "we must set to work, and the factor shall have the honour to make the first throw."

The valiant Triptolemus caught the word; and it is necessary to say that the patience of the whale, in suffering himself to be noosed without resistance, had abated his terrors, and very much lowered the creature in his opinion. He protested the fish had no more wit, and scarcely more activity, than a black snail; and, influenced by this undue contempt of the adversary, he waited neither for a farther signal, nor a better weapon, nor a more suitable position, but, rising in his energy, hurled his graip with all his force against the unfortunate monster. The boats had not yet retreated from him to the distance necessary to ensure safety, when this injudicious commencement of the war took place.

Magnus Troil, who had only jested with the factor, and had reserved the launching the first spear against the whale to some much more skilful hand, had just time to exclaim, "Mind yourselves, lads, or we are all swamped!" when the monster, roused at once from inactivity by the blow of the factor's missile, blew, with a noise resembling the explosion of a steam-engine, a huge shower of water into the air, and at the same time began to lash the waves

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with its tail in every direction. The boat in which Magnus presided received the shower of brine which the animal spouted aloft; and the adventurous Triptolemus, who had a full share of the immersion, was so much astonished and terrified by the consequences of his own valorous deed, that he tumbled backwards amongst the feet of the people, who, too busy to attend to him, were actively engaged in getting the boat into shoal water, out of the whale's reach. Here he lay for some minutes, trampled on by the feet of the boatmen, until they lay on their oars to bale, when the Udaller ordered them to pull to shore, and land this spare hand, who had commenced the fishing so inauspiciously.

While this was doing, the other boats had also pulled off to safer distance, and now, from these as well as from the shore, the unfortunate native of the deep was overwhelmed by all kinds of missiles,—harpoons and spears flew against him on all sides—guns were fired, and each various means of annoyance plied which could excite him to exhaust his strength in useless rage. When the animal found that he was locked in by shallows on all sides, and became sensible, at the same time, of the strain of the cable on his body, the convulsive efforts which he made to escape, accompanied with sounds resembling deep and loud groans, would have moved the compassion of all but a practised whale-fisher. The repeated showers which he spouted into the air began now to be mingled with blood, and the waves which surrounded him assumed the same crimson appearance. Meantime the attempts of the assailants were redoubled; but Mordaunt Mertoun and Cleveland, in particular, exerted themselves to the uttermost, contending who should display most courage in approaching the monster, so tremendous in its

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agonies, and should inflict the most deep and deadly wounds upon its huge bulk.

The contest seemed at last pretty well over; for although the animal continued from time to time to make frantic exertions for liberty, yet its strength appeared so much exhausted, that, even with the assistance of the tide, which had now risen considerably, it was thought it could scarcely extricate itself.

Magnus gave the signal to venture nearer to the whale, calling out at the same time, "Close in, lads, she is not half so mad now—The factor may look for a winter's oil for the two lamps at Harfra—Pull close in, lads."

Ere his orders could be obeyed, the other two boats had anticipated his purpose; and Mordaunt Mertoun, eager to distinguish himself above Cleveland, had, with the whole strength he possessed, plunged a half pike into the body of the animal. But the leviathan, like a nation whose resources appear totally exhausted by previous losses and calamities, collected his whole remaining force for an effort, which proved at once desperate and successful. The wound, last received, had probably reached through his external defences of blubber, and attained some very sensitive part of the system; for he roared aloud, as he sent to the sky a mingled sheet of brine and blood, and snapping the strong cable like a twig, overset Mertoun's boat with a blow of his tail, shot himself, by a mighty effort, over the bar, upon which the tide had now risen considerably, and made out to sea, carrying with him a whole grove of the implements which had been planted in his body, and leaving behind him, on the waters, a dark red trace of his course.

"There goes to sea your cruise of oil, Master Yellowley," said Magnus, "and you must consume mutton suet, or go to bed in the dark."

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"*Operam et oleum perdidi*," muttered Triptolemus "but if they catch me whale-fishing again, I will consent that the fish shall swallow me as he did Jonah."

"But where is Mordaunt Mertoun all this while?" exclaimed Claud Halcro; and it was instantly perceived that the youth, who had been stunned when his boat was stove, was unable to swim to shore as the other sailors did, and now floated senseless upon the waves.

We have noticed the strange and inhuman prejudice, which rendered the Zetlanders of that period unwilling to assist those whom they saw in the act of drowning, though that is the calamity to which the islanders are most frequently exposed. Three men, however, soared above this superstition. The first was Claud Halcro, who threw himself from a small rock headlong into the waves, forgetting, as he himself afterwards stated, that he could not swim, and, if possessed of the harp of Arion, had no dolphins in attendance. The first plunge which the poet made in deep water, reminding him of these deficiencies, he was feign to cling to the rock from which he had dived, and was at length glad to regain the shore, at the expense of a ducking.

Magnus Troil, whose honest heart forgot his late coolness towards Mordaunt, when he saw the youth's danger, would instantly have brought him more effectual assistance, but Eric Scambester held him fast.

"Hout, sir—hout," exclaimed that faithful attendant—"Captain Cleveland has a grip of Mr. Mordaunt—just let the twa strangers help ilk other, and stand by the upshot. The light of the country is not to be quenched for the like of them. Bide still, sir, I say—Bredness Voe is not a bowl of punch, that a man can be fished out of like a toast with a long spoon."

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This sage remonstrance would have been altogether lost upon Magnus, had he not observed that Cleveland had in fact jumped out of the boat, and swam to Mertoun's assistance, and was keeping him afloat till the boat came to the aid of both. As soon as the immediate danger which called so loudly for assistance was thus ended, the honest Udaller's desire to render aid terminated also; and recollecting the cause of offence which he had, or thought he had, against Mordaunt Mertoun, he shook off his butler's hold, and turning round scornfully from the beach, called Eric an old fool for supposing that he cared whether the young fellow sank or swam.

Still, however, amid his assumed indifference, Magnus could not help peeping over the heads of the circle, which, surrounding Mordaunt as soon as he was brought on shore, were charitably employed in endeavouring to recall him to life; and he was not able to attain the appearance of absolute unconcern, until the young man sat up on the beach, and showed plainly that the accident had been attended with no material consequences. It was then first that, cursing the assistants for not giving the lad a glass of brandy, he walked sullenly away, as if totally unconcerned in his fate.

The women, always accurate in observing the tell-tale emotions of each other, failed not to remark, that when the sisters of Burgh-Westra saw Mordaunt immersed in the waves, Minna grew as pale as death, while Brenda uttered successive shrieks of terror. But though there were some nods, winks, and hints that auld acquaintance were not easily forgot, it was, on the whole, candidly admitted, that less than such marks of interest could scarce have been expected, when they saw the companion of their early youth in the act of perishing before their eyes.

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Whatever interest Mordaunt's condition excited while it seemed perilous, began to abate as he recovered himself; and when his senses were fully restored, only Claud Halcro, with two or three others, were standing by him. About ten paces off stood Cleveland—his hair and clothes dropping water, and his features wearing so peculiar an expression, as immediately to arrest the attention of Mordaunt. There was a suppressed smile on his cheek, and a look of pride in his eye, that implied liberation from a painful restraint, and something resembling gratified scorn. Claud Halcro hastened to intimate to Mordaunt, that he owed his life to Cleveland; and the youth, rising from the ground, and losing all other feelings in those of gratitude, stepped forward with his hand stretched out, to offer his warmest thanks to his preserver. But he stopped short in surprise, as Cleveland, retreating a pace or two, folded his arms on his breast, and declined to accept his proffered hand. He drew back in turn, and gazed with astonishment at the ungracious manner, and almost insulting look, with which Cleveland, who had formerly rather expressed a frank cordiality, or at least openness of bearing, now, after having thus rendered him a most important service, chose to receive his thanks.

"It is enough," said Cleveland, observing his surprise, "and it is unnecessary to say more about it. I have paid back my debt, and we are now equal."

"You are more than equal with me, Captain Cleveland," answered Mertoun, "because you endangered your life to do for me what I did for you without the slightest risk;—besides," he added, trying to give the discourse a more pleasant turn, "I have your rifle-gun to boot."

"Cowards only count danger for any point of the game," said Cleveland. "Danger has been my consort for life,

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and sailed with me on a thousand worse voyages;—and for rifles, I have enough of my own, and you may see, when you will, which can use them best."

There was something in the tone with which this was said, that struck Mordaunt strongly; it was miching malicho, as Hamlet says, and meant mischief. Cleveland saw his surprise, came close up to him, and spoke in a low tone of voice:—"Hark ye, my young brother,—there is a custom amongst us gentlemen of fortune, that when we follow the same chase and take the wind out of each other's sails, we think sixty yards of the sea-beach, and a brace of rifles, are no bad way of making our odds even."

"I do not understand you, Captain Cleveland," said Mordaunt.

"I do not suppose you do—I did not suppose you would," said the Captain; and, turning on his heel, with a smile that resembled a sneer, Mordaunt saw him mingle with the guests, and very soon beheld him at the side of Minna, who was talking to him with animated features, that seemed to thank him for his gallant and generous conduct.

"If it were not for Brenda," thought Mordaunt, "I almost wish he had left me in the voe, for no one seems to care whether I am alive or dead.—Two rifles and sixty yards of sea-beach—is that what he points at?—It may come,—but not on the day he has saved my life with risk of his own."

While he was thus musing, Eric Scambester was whispering to Halcro, "If these two lads do not do each other a mischief, there is no faith in freits. Master Mordaunt saves Cleveland,—well.—Cleveland, in requital, has turned all the sunshine of Burgh-Westra to his own

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side of the house; and think what it is to lose favour in such a house as this, where the punch-kettle is never allowed to cool! Well, now that Cleveland in his turn has been such a fool as to fish Mordaunt out of the voe, see if he does not give him sour sillocks for stock-fish."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" replied the poet, "that is all old women's fancies, my friend Eric; for what says glorious Dryden—sainted John,—

> The yellow gall that in your bosom floats,
> Engenders all these melancholy thoughts."

"Saint John, or Saint James either, may be mistaken in the matter," said Eric; "for I think neither of them lived in Zetland. I only say, that if there is faith in old saws, these two lads will do each other a mischief; and if they do, I trust it will light on Mordaunt Mertoun."

"And why, Eric Scambester," said Halcro, hastily and angrily, "should you wish ill to that poor young man, that is worth fifty of the other?"

"Let every one roose the ford as he finds it," replied Eric; "Master Mordaunt is all for wan water, like his old dog-fish of a father; now Captain Cleveland, d'ye see, takes his glass, like an honest fellow and a gentleman."

"Rightly reasoned, and in thine own division," said Halcro; and breaking off their conversation, took his way back to Burgh-Westra, to which the guests of Magnus were now returning, discussing as they went, with much animation, the various incidents of their attack upon the whale, and not a little scandalized that it should have baffled all their exertions.

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"I hope Captain Donderdrecht of the Eintracht of Rotterdam will never hear of it," said Magnus: "he would swear, donner and blitzen, we were only fit to fish flounders." *

* The contest about the whale will remind the poetical reader of Waller's Battle of the Summer Islands.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

> And helter-skelter have I rode to thee,
> And tidings do I bring, and lucky joys,
> And golden times, and happy news of price.
>
> ANCIENT PISTOL.

FORTUNE, who seems at times to bear a conscience, owed the hospitable Udaller some amends, and accordingly repaid to Burgh-Westra the disappointment occasioned by the unsuccessful whale-fishing, by sending thither, on the evening of the day in which that incident happened, no less a person than the jagger, or travelling merchant, as he styled himself, Bryce Snailsfoot, who arrived in great pomp, himself on one pony, and his pack of goods, swelled to nearly double its usual size, forming the burden of another, which was led by a bare-headed bare-legged boy.

As Bryce announced himself the bearer of important news, he was introduced to the dining-apartment, where (for that primitive age was no respecter of persons) he was permitted to sit down at a side-table, and amply supplied with provisions and good liquor; while the attentive hospitality of Magnus permitted no questions to be put to him, until, his hunger and thirst appeased, he announced, with the sense of importance attached to distant travels, that he had just yesterday arrived at Lerwick from Kirkwall, the capital of Orkney, and would have been here yesterday, but it blew hard off the Fitful-head.

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"We had no wind here," said Magnus.

"There is somebody has not been sleeping, then," said the pedlar, "and her name begins with N; but Heaven is above all."

"But the news from Orkney, Bryce, instead of croaking about a capful of wind?"

"Such news," replied Bryce, "as has not been heard this thirty years—not since Cromwell's time."

"There is not another Revolution, is there?" said Halcro; "King James has not come back, as blithe as King Charlie did, has he?"

"It's news," replied the pedlar, "that are worth twenty kings, and kingdoms to boot of them; for what good did the evolutions ever do us? and I dare say we have seen a dozen, great and sma'."

"Are any Indiamen come north about?" said Magnus Troil.

"Ye are nearer the mark, Fowd," said the jagger; "but it is nae Indiaman, but a gallant armed vessel, chokeful of merchandise, that they part with so easy that a decent man like mysell can afford to give the country the best pennyworths you ever saw; and that you will say, when I open that pack, for I count to carry it back another sort lighter than when I brought it here."

"Ay, ay, Bryce," said the Udaller, "you must have had good bargains if you sell cheap; but what ship was it?"

"Cannot justly say—I spoke to nobody but the captain, who was a discreet man; but she had been down on the Spanish Main, for she has silks and satins, and tobacco, I warrant you, and wine, and no lack of sugar, and bonny-wallies baith of silver and gowd, and a bonnie dredging of gold dust into the bargain."

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"What like was she?" said Cleveland, who seemed to give much attention.

"A stout ship," said the itinerant merchant, "schooner-rigged, sails like a dolphin, they say, carries twelve guns, and is pierced for twenty."

"Did you hear the captain's name?" said Cleveland, speaking rather lower than his usual tone.

"I just ca'd him the Captain," replied Bryce Snailsfoot; "for I make it a rule never to ask questions of them I deal with in the way of trade; for there is many an honest captain, begging your pardon, Captain Cleveland, that does not care to have his name tacked to his title; and as long as we ken what bargains we are making, what signifies it wha we are making them wi', ye ken?"

"Bryce Snailsfoot is a cautious man," said the Udaller, laughing; "he knows a fool may ask more questions than a wise man cares to answer."

"I have dealt with the fair traders in my day," replied Snailsfoot, "and I ken nae use in blurting braid out with a man's name at every moment; but I will uphold this gentleman to be a gallant commander—ay, and a kind one too; for every one of his crew is as brave in apparel as himself nearly—the very foremast-men have their silken scarfs; I have seen many a lady wear a warse, and think hersell nae sma' drink—and for siller buttons, and buckles, and the lave of sic vanities, there is nae end of them."

"Idiots!" muttered Cleveland between his teeth; and then added, "I suppose they are often ashore, to show all their bravery to the lasses of Kirkwall?"

"Ne'er a bit of that are they. The Captain will scarce let them stir ashore without the boatswain go in the boat—as rough a tarpaulin as ever swab'd a deck—and you

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may as weel catch a cat without her claws, as him without his cutlass and his double brace of pistols about him; every man stands as much in awe of him as of the commander himsell."

"That must be Hawkins, or the devil," said Cleveland.

"Aweel, Captain," replied the jagger, "be he the tane or the tither, or a wee bit o' baith, mind it is you that give him these names, and not me."

"Why, Captain Cleveland," said the Udaller, "this may prove the very consort you spoke of."

"They must have had some good luck, then," said Cleveland, "to put them in better plight than when I left them.—Did they speak of having lost their consort, pedlar?"

"In troth did they," said Bryce; "that is, they said something about a partner that had gone down to Davie Jones in these seas."

"And did you tell them what you knew of her?" said the Udaller.

"And wha the deevil wad hae been the fule, then," said the pedlar, "that I suld say sae? When they kend what came of the ship, the next question wad have been about the cargo,—and ye wad not have had me bring down an armed vessel on the coast, to harrie the poor folk about a wheen rags of duds that the sea flung upon their shores?"

"Besides what might have been found in your own pack, you scoundrel!" said Magnus Troil; an observation which produced a loud laugh. The Udaller could not help joining in the hilarity which applauded his jest; but instantly composing his countenance, he said, in an unusually grave tone, "You may laugh, my friends; but this is a matter which brings both a curse and a shame on the

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country; and till we learn to regard the rights of them that suffer by the winds and waves, we shall deserve to be oppressed and hag-ridden, as we have been and are, by the superior strength of the strangers who rule us."

The company hung their heads at the rebuke of Magnus Troil. Perhaps some, even of the better class, might be conscience-struck on their own account; and all of them were sensible that the appetite for plunder, on the part of the tenants and inferiors, was not at all times restrained with sufficient strictness. But Cleveland made answer gaily, "If these honest fellows be my comrades, I will answer for them that they will never trouble the country about a parcel of chests, hammocks, and such trumpery, that the Roost may have washed ashore out of my poor sloop. What signifies to them whether the trash went to Bryce Snailsfoot, or to the bottom, or to the devil? So unbuckle thy pack, Bryce, and show the ladies thy cargo, and perhaps we may see something that will please them."

"It cannot be his consort," said Brenda, in a whisper to her sister; "he would have shown more joy at their appearance."

"It must be the vessel," answered Minna; "I saw his eye glisten at the thought of being again united to the partner of his dangers."

"Perhaps it glistened," said her sister, still apart, "at the thought of leaving Zetland; it is difficult to guess the thought of the heart from the glance of the eye."

"Judge not, at least, unkindly of a friend's thought," said Minna: "and then, Brenda, if you are mistaken, the fault rests not with you."

During this dialogue, Bryce Snailsfoot was busied in uncoiling the carefully arranged cordage of his pack,

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which amounted to six good yards of dressed sealskin, curiously complicated and secured by all manner of knots and buckles. He was considerably interrupted in the task by the Udaller and others, who pressed him with questions respecting the stranger vessel.

"Were the officers often ashore? and how were they received by the people of Kirkwall?" said Magnus Troil.

"Excellently well," answered Bryce Snailsfoot; "and the Captain and one or two of his men had been at some of the vanities and dances which went forward in the town; but there had been some word about customs, or king's duties, or the like, and some of the higher folk, that took upon them as magistrates, or the like, had had words with the Captain, and he refused to satisfy them; and then it is like he was more coldly looked on, and he spoke of carrying the ship round to Stromness, or the Langhope, for she lay under the guns of the battery at Kirkwall. But he" (Bryce) "thought she wad bide at Kirkwall till the summer-fair was over, for all that."

"The Orkney gentry," said Magnus Troil, "are always in a hurry to draw the Scotch collar tighter round their own necks. Is it not enough that we must pay *scat* and *wattle*, which were all the public dues under our old Norse government; but must they come over us with king's dues and customs besides? It is the part of an honest man to resist these things. I have done so all my life, and will do so to the end of it."

There was a loud jubilee and shout of applause among the guests, who were (some of them at least) better pleased with Magnus Troil's latitudinarian principles with respect to the public revenue, (which were extremely natural to those living in so secluded a situation, and subjected to many additional exactions,) than they

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had been with the rigour of his judgment on the subject of wrecked goods. But Minna's inexperienced feelings carried her farther than her father, while she whispered to Brenda, not unheard by Cleveland, that the tame spirit of the Orcadians had missed every chance which late incidents had given them to emancipate these islands from the Scottish yoke.

"Why," she said, "should we not, under so many changes as late times have introduced, have seized the opportunity to shake off an allegiance which is not justly due from us, and to return to the protection of Denmark, our parent country? Why should we yet hesitate to do this, but that the gentry of Orkney have mixed families and friendship so much with our invaders, that they have become dead to the throb of the heroic Norse blood, which they derived from their ancestors?"

The latter part of this patriotic speech happened to reach the astonished ears of our friend Triptolemus, who, having a sincere devotion for the Protestant succession, and the Revolution as established, was surprised into the ejaculation, "As the old cock crows the young cock learns—hen I should say, mistress, and I crave your pardon if I say any thing amiss in either gender. But it is a happy country where the father declares against the king's customs, and the daughter against the king's crown; and, in my judgment, it can end in naething but trees and tows."

"Trees are scarce among us," said Magnus; "and for ropes, we need them for our rigging, and cannot spare them to be shirt collars."

"And whoever," said the Captain, "takes umbrage at what this young lady says, had better keep his ears and tongue for a safer employment than such an adventure."

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"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, "it helps the matter much to speak truths, whilk are as unwelcome to a proud stomach as wet clover to a cow's, in a land where lads are ready to draw the whittle if a lassie but looks awry. But what manners are to be expected in a country where folk call a pleugh-sock a markal?"

"Hark ye, Master Yellowley," said the Captain, smiling, "I hope my manners are not among those abuses which you come hither to reform; any experiment on them may be dangerous."

"As well as difficult," said Triptolemus dryly; "but fear nothing, Captain Cleveland, from my remonstrances. My labours regard the men and things of the earth, and not the men and things of the sea,—you are not of my element."

"Let us be friends, then, old clod-compeller," said the Captain.

"Clod-compeller!" said the agriculturist, bethinking himself of the lore of his earlier days; "Clod-compeller *pro* cloud-compeller, Νεφελιγερέτα Ζευς—*Græcum est*,—in which voyage came you by that phrase?"

"I have travelled books as well as seas in my day," said the Captain; "but my last voyages have been of a sort to make me forget my early cruises through classic knowledge.—But come here, Bryce—hast cast off the lashing?—Come all hands, and let us see if he has aught in his cargo that is worth looking upon."

With a proud, and, at the same time, a wily smile, did the crafty pedlar display a collection of wares far superior to those which usually filled his packages, and, in particular, some stuffs and embroideries, of such beauty and curiosity, fringed, flowered, and worked, with such art and magnificence, upon foreign and arabesque patterns,

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that the sight might have dazzled a far more brilliant company than the simple race of Thule. All beheld and admired, while Mistress Baby Yellowley, holding up her hands, protested it was a sin even to look upon such extravagance, and worse than murder so much as to ask the price of them.

Others, however, were more courageous; and the prices demanded by the merchant, if they were not, as he himself declared, something just more than nothing—short only of an absolute free gift of his wares, were nevertheless so moderate, as to show that he himself must have made an easy acquisition of the goods, judging by the rate at which he offered to part with them. Accordingly, the cheapness of the articles created a rapid sale; for in Zetland, as well as elsewhere, wise folk buy more from the prudential desire to secure a good bargain, than from any real occasion for the purchase. The Lady Glowrowrum bought seven petticoats and twelve stomachers on this sole principle, and other matrons present rivalled her in this sagacious species of economy. The Udaller was also a considerable purchaser; but the principal customer for whatever could please the eye of beauty, was the gallant Captain Cleveland, who rummaged the jagger's stores in selecting presents for the ladies of the party, in which Minna and Brenda Troil were especially remembered.

"I fear," said Magnus Troil, "that the young women are to consider these pretty presents as keepsakes, and that all this liberality is only a sure sign we are soon to lose you?"

This question seemed to embarrass him to whom it was put.

"I scarce know," he said, with some hesitation,

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"whether this vessel is my consort or no—I must take a trip to Kirkwall to make sure of that matter, and then I hope to return to Dunrossness to bid you all farewell."

"In that case," said the Udaller, after a moment's pause, "I think I may carry you thither. I should be at the Kirkwall fair, to settle with the merchants I have consigned my fish to, and I have often promised Minna and Brenda that they should see the fair. Perhaps also your consort, or these strangers, whoever they be, may have some merchandise that will suit me. I love to see my rigging-loft well stocked with goods, almost as much as to see it full of dancers. We will go to Orkney in my own brig, and I can offer you a hammock, if you will."

The offer seemed so acceptable to Cleveland, that, after pouring himself forth in thanks, he seemed determined to mark his joy by exhausting Bryce Snailsfoot's treasures in liberality to the company. The contents of a purse of gold were transferred to the jagger, with a facility and indifference on the part of its former owner which argued either the greatest profusion or consciousness of superior and inexhaustible wealth; so that Baby whispered to her brother, that "if he could afford to fling away money at this rate, the lad had made a better voyage in a broken ship, than all the skippers of Dundee had made in their haill anes for a twelvemonth past."

But the angry feeling in which she made this remark was much mollified, when Cleveland, whose object it seemed that evening to be, to buy golden opinions of all sorts of men, approached her with a garment somewhat resembling in shape the Scottish plaid, but woven of a sort of wool so soft, that it felt to the touch as if it were composed of eider-down. "This," he said, "was a part

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of a Spanish lady's dress called a *mantilla;* as it would exactly fit the size of Mrs. Baby Yellowley, and was very well suited for the fogs of the climate of Zetland, he entreated her to wear it for his sake." The lady, with as much condescending sweetness as her countenance was able to express, not only consented to receive this mark of gallantry, but permitted the donor to arrange the mantilla upon her projecting and bony shoulder-blades, where, said Claud Halcro, "it hung, for all the world, as if it had been stretched betwixt a couple of cloak-pins."

While the Captain was performing this piece of courtesy, much to the entertainment of the company, which, it may be presumed, was his principal object from the beginning, Mordaunt Mertoun made purchase of a small golden chaplet, with the private intention of presenting it to Brenda, when he should find an opportunity. The price was fixed, and the article laid aside. Claud Halcro also showed some desire of possessing a silver box of antique shape, for depositing tobacco, which he was in the habit of using in considerable quantity. But the bard seldom had current coin in promptitude, and, indeed, in his wandering way of life, had little occasion for any; and Bryce, on the other hand, his having been hitherto a ready-money trade, protested, that his very moderate profits upon such rare and choice articles, would not allow of his affording credit to the purchaser. Mordaunt gathered the import of this conversation from the mode in which they whispered together, while the bard seemed to advance a wishful finger towards the box in question, and the cautious pedlar detained it with the weight of his whole hand, as if he had been afraid it would literally make itself wings, and fly into Claud Halcro's pocket. Mordaunt Mertoun at this moment, desirous to gratify an

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old acquaintance, laid the price of the box on the table, and said he would not permit Master Halcro to purchase that box, as he had settled in his own mind to make him a present of it.

"I cannot think of robbing you, my dear young friend," said the poet; "but the truth is, that that same box does remind me strangely of glorious John's, out of which I had the honour to take a pinch at the Wits' Coffeehouse, for which I think more highly of my right-hand finger and thumb than any other part of my body; only you must allow me to pay you back the price when my Urkaster stock-fish come to market."

"Settle that as you like betwixt you," said the jagger, taking up Mordaunt's money; "the box is bought and sold."

"And how dare you sell over again," said Captain Cleveland, suddenly interfering, "what you already have sold to me?"

All were surprised at this interjection, which was hastily made, as Cleveland, having turned from Mistress Baby, had become suddenly, and, as it seemed, not without emotion, aware what articles Bryce Snailsfoot was now disposing of. To this short and fierce question, the jagger, afraid to contradict a customer of his description, answered only by stammering, that the "Lord knew he meant nae offence."

"How, sir! no offence!" said the seaman, "and dispose of my property?" extending his hand at the same time to the box and chaplet; "restore the young gentleman's money, and learn to keep your course on the meridian of honesty."

The jagger, confused and reluctant, pulled out his leathern pouch to repay to Mordaunt the money he had

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just deposited in it; but the youth was not to be so satisfied.

"The articles," he said, "were bought and sold—these were your own words, Bryce Snailsfoot, in Master Halcro's hearing; and I will suffer neither you nor any other to deprive me of my property."

"*Your* property, young man?" said Cleveland; "It is mine,—I spoke to Bryce respecting them an instant before I turned from the table."

"I—I—I had not just heard distinctly," said Bryce, evidently unwilling to offend either party.

"Come, come," said the Udaller, "we will have no quarrelling about baubles; we shall be summoned presently to the rigging-loft,"—so he used to call the apartment used as a ball-room,—"and we must all go in good humour. The things shall remain with Bryce for to-night, and to-morrow I will myself settle whom they shall belong to."

The laws of the Udaller in his own house were absolute as those of the Medes. The two young men regarding each other with looks of sullen displeasure, drew off in different directions.

It is seldom that the second day of a prolonged festival equals the first. The spirits, as well as the limbs, are jaded, and unequal to the renewed expenditure of animation and exertion; and the dance of Burgh-Westra was sustained with much less mirth than on the preceding evening. It was yet an hour from midnight, when even the reluctant Magnus Troil, after regretting the degeneracy of the times, and wishing he could transfuse into the modern Hialtlanders some of the vigour which still animated his own frame, found himself compelled to give the signal for general retreat.

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Just as this took place, Halcro, leading Mordaunt Mertoun a little aside, said he had a message to him from Captain Cleveland.

"A message!" said Mordaunt, his heart beating somewhat thick as he spoke—"A challenge, I suppose?"

"A challenge!" repeated Halcro; "whoever heard of a challenge in our quiet islands? Do you think that I look like a carrier of challenges, and to you of all men living?—I am none of those fighting fools, as glorious John calls them; and it was not quite a message I had to deliver—only thus far,—this Captain Cleveland, I find, hath set his heart upon having these articles you looked at."

"He shall not have them, I swear to you," replied Mordaunt Mertoun.

"Nay, but hear me," said Halcro; "it seems that, by the marks or arms that are upon them, he knows that they were formerly his property. Now, were you to give me the box, as you promised, I fairly tell you, I should give the man back his own."

"And Brenda might do the like," thought Mordaunt to himself, and instantly replied aloud, "I have thought better of it, my friend. Captain Cleveland shall have the toys he sets such store by, but it is on one sole condition."

"Nay, you will spoil all with your conditions," said Halcro; "for as glorious John says, conditions are but——"

"Hear me, I say, with patience.—My condition is, that he keeps the toys in exchange for the rifle-gun I accepted from him, which will leave no obligation between us on either side."

"I see where you would be—this is Sebastian and

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Dorax all over. Well, you may let the jagger know he is to deliver the things to Cleveland—I think he is mad to have them—and I will let Cleveland know the conditions annexed, otherwise honest Bryce might come by two payments instead of one; and I believe his conscience would not choke upon it."

With these words, Halcro went to seek out Cleveland, while Mordaunt, observing Snailsfoot, who, as a sort of privileged person, had thrust himself into the crowd at the bottom of the dancing-room, went up to him, and gave him directions to deliver the disputed articles to Cleveland as soon as he had an opportunity.

"Ye are in the right, Maister Mordaunt," said the jagger; "ye are a prudent and a sensible lad—a calm answer turneth away wrath—and mysell, I sall be willing to please you in ony trifling matters in my sma' way; for, between the Udaller of Burgh-Westra and Captain Cleveland, a man is, as it were, atween the deil and the deep sea; and it was like that the Udaller, in the end, would have taken your part in the dispute, for he is a man that loves justice."

"Which apparently you care very little about, Master Snailsfoot," said Mordaunt, "otherwise there could have been no dispute whatsoever, the right being so clearly on my side, if you had pleased to bear witness according to the dictates of truth."

"Maister Mordaunt," said the jagger, "I must own there was, as it were, a colouring or shadow of justice on your side; but then, the justice that I meddle with, is only justice in the way of trade, to have an ellwand of due length, if it be not something worn out with leaning on it in my lang and painful journeys, and to buy and sell by just weight and measure, twenty-four merks to the

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lispund; but I have nothing to do, to do justice betwixt man and man, like a Fowd or a Lawright-man, at a lawting lang syne."

"No one asked you to do so, but only to give evidence according to your conscience," replied Mordaunt, not greatly pleased either with the part the jagger had acted during the dispute, or the construction which he seemed to put on his own motives for yielding up the point.

But Bryce Snailsfoot wanted not his answer; "My conscience," he said, "Maister Mordaunt, is as tender as ony man's in my degree; but she is something of a timorsome nature, cannot abide angry folk, and can never speak above her breath, when there is aught of a fray going forward. Indeed, she hath at all times a small and low voice."

"Which you are not much in the habit of listening to," said Mordaunt.

"There is that on your ain breast that proves the contrary," said Bryce, resolutely.

"In my breast?" said Mordaunt somewhat angrily,—"what know I of you?"

"I said *on* your breast, Maister Mordaunt, and not *in* it. I am sure nae eye that looks on that waisteoat upon your own gallant brisket, but will say, that the merchant who sold such a piece for four dollars had justice and conscience, and a kind heart to a customer to the boot of a' that; sae ye shouldna be sae thrawart wi' me for having spared the breath of my mouth in a fool's quarrel."

"I thrawart!" said Mordaunt; "pooh, you silly man! I have no quarrel with you."

"I am glad of it," said the travelling merchant; "I will quarrel with no man, with my will—least of all with an old customer; and if you will walk by my advice, you

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will quarrel nane with Captain Cleveland. He is like one of yon cutters and slashers that have come into Kirkwall, that think as little of slicing a man, as we do of flinching a whale—it's their trade to fight, and they live by it; and they have the advantage of the like of you, that only take it up at your own hand, and in the way of pastime, when you hae nothing better to do."

The company had now almost all dispersed; and Mordaunt, laughing at the jagger's caution, bade him good-night, and went to his own place of repose, which had been assigned to him by Eric Scambester, (who acted the part of chamberlain, as well as butler,) in a small room or rather closet, in one of the out-houses, furnished for the occasion with the hammock of a sailor.

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CHAPTER XIX.

I pass like night from land to land,
I have strange power of speech;
So soon as e'er his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me,
To him my tale I teach.

COLERIDGE'S RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

THE daughters of Magnus Troil shared the same bed, in a chamber which had been that of their parents before the death of their mother. Magnus, who suffered grievously under that dispensation of Providence, had become disgusted with the apartment. The nuptial chamber was abandoned to the pledges of his bereaved affection, of whom the eldest was at that period only four years old, or thereabouts; and having been their nursery in infancy, continued, though now tricked and adorned according to the best fashion of the islands, and the taste of the lovely sisters themselves, to be their sleeping-room, or, in the old Norse dialect, their bower.

It had been for many years the scene of the most intimate confidence, if that could be called confidence, where, in truth, there was nothing to be confided; where neither sister had a secret; and where every thought that had birth in the bosom of the one, was, without either hesitation or doubt, confided to the other as spontaneously as it had arisen. But, since Cleveland abode in the mansion of Burgh-Westra, each of the lovely sisters had

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entertained thoughts which are not lightly or easily communicated, unless she who listens to them has previously assured herself that the confidence will be kindly received. Minna had noticed, what other and less interested observers had been unable to perceive, that Cleveland, namely, held a lower rank in Brenda's opinion than in her own; and Brenda, on her side, thought that Minna had hastily and unjustly joined in the prejudices which had been excited against Mordaunt Mertoun in the mind of their father. Each was sensible that she was no longer the same to her sister; and this conviction was a painful addition to other painful apprehensions which they supposed they had to struggle with. Their manner toward each other was, in outward appearances, and in all the little cares by which affection can be expressed, even more assiduously kind than before, as if both, conscious that their internal reserve was a breach of their sisterly union, strove to atone for it by double assiduity in those external marks of affection, which, at other times, when there was nothing to hide, might be omitted without inferring any consequences.

On the night referred to in particular, the sisters felt more especially the decay of the confidence which used to exist betwixt them. The proposed voyage to Kirkwall, and that at the time of the fair, when persons of every degree in these islands repair thither, either for business or amusement, was likely to be an important incident in lives usually so simple and uniform as theirs; and a few months ago, Minna and Brenda would have been awake half the night, anticipating in their talk with each other, all that was likely to happen on so momentous an occasion. But now the subject was just mentioned, and suffered to drop, as if the topic was likely to produce

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a difference betwixt them, or to call forth a more open display of their several opinions than either was willing to make to the other.

Yet such was their natural openness and gentleness of disposition, that each sister imputed to herself the fault that there was aught like estrangement existing between them; and when, having finished their devotions and betaken themselves to their common couch, they folded each other in their arms, and exchanged a sisterly kiss, and a sisterly good-night, they seemed mutually to ask pardon, and to exchange forgiveness, although neither said a word of offence, either offered or received; and both were soon plunged in that light and yet profound repose, which is only enjoyed when sleep sinks down on the eyes of youth and innocence.

On the night to which the story relates, both sisters were visited by dreams, which, though varied by the moods and habits of the sleepers, bore yet a strange general resemblance to each other.

Minna dreamed that she was in one of the most lonely recesses of the beach, called Swartaster, where the incessant operation of the waves, indenting a calcareous rock, has formed a deep *halier*, which, in the language of the island, means a subterranean cavern, into which the tide ebbs and flows. Many of these run to an extraordinary and unascertained depth under ground, and are the secure retreat of cormorants and seals, which it is neither easy nor safe to pursue to their extreme recesses. Amongst these, this halier of Swartaster was accounted peculiarly inaccessible, and shunned both by fowlers and by seamen, on account of sharp angles and turnings in the cave itself, as well as the sunken rocks which rendered it very dangerous for skiffs or boats to advance

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far into it, especially if there was the usual swell of an island tide. From the dark-browed mouth of this cavern, it seemed to Minna in her dream, that she beheld a mermaid issue, not in the classical dress of a Nereid, as in Claud Halcro's mask of the preceding evening, but with comb and glass in hand, according to popular belief, and lashing the waves with that long scaly train, which, in the traditions of the country, forms so frightful a contrast with the fair face, long tresses, and displayed bosom, of a human and earthly female, of surpassing beauty. She seemed to beckon to Minna, while her wild notes rang sadly in her ear, and denounced, in prophetic sounds, calamity and woe.

The vision of Brenda was of a different description, yet equally melancholy. She sat, as she thought, in her favourite bower, surrounded by her father and a party of his most beloved friends, amongst whom Mordaunt Mertoun was not forgotten. She was required to sing; and she strove to entertain them with a lively ditty, in which she was accounted eminently successful, and which she sung with such simple, yet natural humour, as seldom failed to produce shouts of laughter and applause, while all who could, or who could not sing, were irresistibly compelled to lend their voices to the chorus. But, on this occasion, it seemed as if her own voice refused all its usual duty, and as if, while she felt herself unable to express the words of the well-known air, it assumed, in her own despite, the deep tones and wild and melancholy notes of Norna of Fitful-head, for the purpose of chanting some wild Runic rhyme, resembling those sung by the heathen priests of old, when the victim (too often human) was bound to the fatal altar of Odin or of Thor.

At length the two sisters at once started from sleep

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and, uttering a low scream of fear, clasped themselves in each other's arms. For their fancy had not altogether played them false; the sounds, which had suggested their dreams, were real, and sung within their apartment. They knew the voice well, indeed, and yet, knowing to whom it belonged, their surprise and fear were scarce the less, when they saw the well-known Norna of Fitful-head, seated by the chimney of the apartment, which, during the summer season, contained an iron lamp well trimmed, and, in winter, a fire of wood or of turf.

She was wrapped in her long and ample garment of wadmaal, and moved her body slowly to and fro over the pale flame of the lamp, as she sung lines to the following purport, in a slow, sad, and almost an unearthly accent:—

"For leagues along the watery way,
Through gulf and stream my course has been;
The billows know my Runic lay,
And smooth their crests to silent green.

"The billows know my Runic lay,—
The gulf grows smooth, the stream is still;
But human hearts, more wild than they,
Know but the rule of wayward will.

"One hour is mine, in all the year,
To tell my woes,—and one alone;
When gleams this magic lamp, 'tis here,—
When dies the mystic light, 'tis gone.

"Daughters of northern Magnus, hail!
The lamp is lit, the flame is clear,—
To you I come to tell my tale,
Awake, arise, my tale to hear!"

Norna was well known to the daughters of Troil, but it was not without emotion, although varied by their respective dispositions, that they beheld her so unexpect-

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edly, and at such an hour. Their opinions with respect to the supernatural attributes to which she pretended, were extremely different.

Minna, with an unusual intensity of imagination, although superior in talent to her sister, was more apt to listen to, and delight in, every tale of wonder, and was at all times more willing to admit impressions which gave her fancy scope and exercise, without minutely examining their reality. Brenda, on the other hand, had, in her gaiety, a slight propensity to satire, and was often tempted to laugh at the very circumstances upon which Minna founded her imaginative dreams; and, like all who love the ludicrous, she did not readily suffer herself to be imposed upon, or overawed, by pompous pretensions of any kind whatever. But, as her nerves were weaker and more irritable than those of her sister, she often paid involuntary homage, by her fears, to ideas, which her reason disowned; and hence Claud Halcro used to say, in reference to many of the traditionary superstitions around Burgh-Westra, that Minna believed them without trembling, and that Brenda trembled without believing them. In our own more enlightened days, there are few whose undoubting mind and native courage have not felt Minna's high-wrought tone of enthusiasm; and perhaps still fewer, who have not, at one time or other, felt, like Brenda, their nerves confess the influence of terrors which their reason disowned and despised.

Under the power of such different feelings, Minna, when the first moment of surprise was over, prepared to spring from her bed, and go to greet Norna, who, she doubted not, had come on some errand fraught with fate; while Brenda, who only beheld in her a woman partially

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deranged in her understanding, and who yet, from the extravagance of her claims, regarded her as an undefined object of awe, or rather terror, detained her sister by an eager and terrified grasp, while she whispered in her ear an anxious entreaty that she would call for assistance. But the soul of Minna was too highly wrought up by the crisis at which her fate seemed to have arrived, to permit her to follow the dictates of her sister's fears; and, extricating herself from Brenda's hold, she hastily threw on a loose night-gown, and, stepping boldly across the apartment, while her heart throbbed rather with high excitement than with fear, she thus addressed her singular visitor:—

"Norna, if your mission regards us, as your words seem to express, there is one of us, at least, who will receive its import with reverence, but without fear."

"Norna, dear Norna," said the tremulous voice of Brenda,—who, feeling no safety in the bed after Minna quitted it, had followed her, as fugitives crowd into the rear of an advancing army, because they dare not remain behind, and who now stood half concealed by her sister, and holding fast by the skirts of her gown,—"Norna, dear Norna," said she, "whatever you are to say, let it be to-morrow. I will call Euphane Fea, the housekeeper, and she will find you a bed for the night."

"No bed for me!" said their noctural visitor; "no closing of the eyes for me! They have watched as shelf and stack appeared and disappeared betwixt Burgh-Westra and Orkney—they have seen the man of Hoy sink into the sea, and the Peak of Hengcliff arise from it, and yet they have not tasted of slumber; nor must they slumber now till my task is ended. Sit down, then, Minna, and thou, silly trembler, sit down, while I trim

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my lamp—Don your clothes, for the tale is long, and ere 'tis done, ye will shiver with worse than cold."

"For Heaven's sake, then, put it off till daylight, dear Norna!" said Brenda; "the dawn cannot be far distant; and if you are to tell us of any thing frightful, let it be by daylight, and not by the dim glimmer of that blue lamp!"

"Patience, fool!" said their uninvited guest. "Not by daylight, should Norna tell a tale that might blot the sun out of heaven, and blight the hopes of the hundred boats that will leave this shore ere noon, to commence their deep-sea fishing,—ay, and of the hundred families that will await their return. The demon, whom the sounds will not fail to awaken, must shake his dark wings over a shipless and a boatless sea, as he rushes from his mountain to drink the accents of horror he loves so well to listen to."

"Have pity on Brenda's fears, good Norna," said the elder sister, "and at least postpone this frightful communication to another place and hour."

"Maiden, no!" replied Norna, sternly; "it must be told while that lamp yet burns. Mine is no daylight tale —by that lamp it must be told, which is framed out of the gibbet-irons of the cruel Lord of Wodensvoe, who murdered his brother; and has for its nourishment—but be that nameless—enough that its food never came either from the fish or from the fruit!—See, it waxes dim and dimmer, nor must my tale last longer than its flame endureth. Sit ye down there, while I sit here opposite to you, and place the lamp betwixt us; for within the sphere of its light the demon dares not venture."

The sisters obeyed, Minna casting a slow, awe-struck, yet determined look all around, as if to see the Being, who, according to the doubtful words of Norna, hovered

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in their neighbourhood; while Brenda's fears were min gled with some share both of anger and of impatience. Norna paid no attention to either, but began her story in the following words:—

"Ye know, my daughters, that your blood is allied to mine, but in what degree ye know not; for there was early hostility betwixt your grandsire and him who had the misfortune to call me daughter.—Let me term him by his Christian name of Erland, for that which marks our relation I dare not bestow. Your grandsire Olave was the brother of Erland. But when the wide Udal possessions of their father Rolfe Troil, the most rich and well estated of any who descended from the old Norse stock, were divided betwixt the brothers, the Fowd gave to Erland his father's lands in Orkney, and reserved for Olave those of Hialtland. Discord arose between the brethren; for Erland held that he was wronged; and when the Lawting,* with the Raddmen and Lawright men, confirmed the division, he went in wrath to Orkney, cursing Hialtland and its inhabitants—cursing his brother and his blood.

"But the love of the rock and of the mountain still wrought on Erland's mind, and he fixed his dwelling not on the soft hills of Ophir, or the green plains of Gramesey, but in the wild and mountainous Isle of Hoy, whose summit rises to the sky like the cliffs of Foulah and of Feroe.† He knew,—that unhappy Erland,—whatever

* The Lawting was the Comitia, or Supreme Court of the country, being retained both in Orkney and Zetland, and presenting, in their constitution, the rude origin of a parliament.

† And from which hill of Hoy, at midsummer, the sun may be seen, it is said, at midnight. So says the geographer Bleau, although, according to Dr. Wallace, it cannot be the true body of the sun which is visible, but only its image refracted through some watery cloud upon the horizon.

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of legendary lore Scald and Bard had left behind them; and to teach me that knowledge, which was to cost us both so dear, was the chief occupation of his old age. I learned to visit each lonely barrow—each lofty cairn—to tell its appropriate tale, and to soothe with rhymes in his praise the spirit of the stern warrior who dwelt within. I knew where the sacrifices were made of yore to Thor and to Odin—on what stones the blood of the victims flowed—where stood the dark-browed priest—where the crested chiefs, who consulted the will of the idol—where the more distant crowd of inferior worshippers, who looked on in awe or in terror. The places most shunned by the timid peasants had no terrors for me; I dared walk in the fairy circle, and sleep by the magic spring.

"But, for my misfortune, I was chiefly fond to linger about the Dwarfie Stone, as it is called, a relic of antiquity, which strangers look on with curiosity, and the natives with awe. It is a huge fragment of a rock, which lies in a broken and rude valley, full of stones and precipices, in the recesses of the Ward-hill of Hoy. The inside of the rock has two couches, hewn by no earthly hand, and having a small passage between them. The door-way is now open to the weather; but beside it lies a large stone, which, adapted to grooves, still visible in the entrance, once had served to open and to close this extraordinary dwelling, which Trolld, a dwarf famous in the northern Sagas, is said to have framed for his own favourite residence. The lonely shepherd avoids the place, for at sunrise, high noon, or sunset, the misshapen form of the necromantic owner may sometimes still be seen sitting by the Dwarfie Stone.* I feared not the

* This is one of the wonders of the Orkney Islands, though it has been rather undervalued by their late historian, Mr. Barry. The

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appairition, for, Minna, my heart was as bold, and my hand was as innocent, as yours. In my childish courage, I was even but too presumptuous, and the thirst after

Island of Hoy rises abruptly, starting as it were out of the sea, which is contrary to the gentle and flat character of the other Isles of Orkney. It consists of a mountain having different eminences or peaks. It is very steep, furrowed with ravines, and placed so as to catch the mists of the Western Ocean, and has a noble and picturesque effect from all points of view. The highest peak is divided from another eminence, called the Ward-hill, by a long swampy valley full of peat-bogs. Upon the slope of this last hill, and just where the principal mountain of Hoy opens in a hollow swamp, or corri, lies what is called the Dwarfie Stone. It is a great fragment of sandstone, composing one solid mass, which has long since been detached from a belt of the same materials, cresting the eminence above the spot where it now lies, and which has slid down till it reached its present situation. The rock is about seven feet high, twenty-two feet long, and seventeen feet broad. The upper end of it is hollowed by iron tools, of which the marks are evident, into a sort of apartment, containing two beds of stone, with a passage between them. The uppermost and largest bed is five feet eight inches long, by two feet broad, which was supposed to be used by the dwarf himself; the lower couch is shorter, and rounded off, instead of being squared at the corners. There is an entrance of about three feet and a half square, and a stone lies before it calculated to fit the opening. A sort of skylight window gives light to the apartment. We can only guess at the purpose of this monument, and different ideas have been suggested. Some have supposed it the work of some travelling mason; but the *cui bono* would remain to be accounted for. The Rev. Mr. Barry conjectures it to be a hermit's cell; but it displays no symbol of Christianity, and the door opens to the westward. The Orcadian traditions allege the work to be that of a dwarf, to whom they ascribe supernatural powers, and a malevolent disposition, the attributes of that race in Norse mythology. Whoever inhabited this singular den certainly enjoyed

"Pillow cold, and sheets not warm."

I observed, that commencing just opposite to the Dwarfie Stone, and extending in a line to the sea-beach, there are a number of small barrows, or cairns, which seem to connect the stone with a very large cairn where we landed. This curious monument may therefore have been intended as a temple of some kind to the northern Dii Manes, to which the cairns might direct worshippers.

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things unattainable led me, like our primitive mother, to desire increase of knowledge, even by prohibited means. I longed to possess the power of the Voluspæ and divining women of our ancient race; to wield, like them, command over the elements; and to summon the ghosts of deceased heroes from their caverns, that they might recite their daring deeds, and impart to me their hidden treasures. Often when watching by the Dwarfie Stone, with mine eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, which rises above that gloomy valley, I have distinguished, among the dark rocks, that wonderful carbuncle,* which gleams ruddy as a furnace to them who view it from beneath, but has ever become invisible to him whose daring foot has scaled the precipices from which it darts its splendour. My vain and youthful bosom burned to investigate these and an hundred other mysteries, which the Sagas that I perused, or learned from Erland, rather indicated than explained; and in my daring mood, I called on the Lord of the Dwarfie Stone to aid me in attaining knowledge inaccessible to mere mortals."

"And the evil spirit heard your summons?" said Minna, her blood curdling as she listened.

"Hush," said Norna, lowering her voice, "vex him

* "At the west end of this stone, (*i. e.* the Dwarfie Stone,) stands an exceeding high mountain of a steep ascent, called the Ward-hill of Hoy, near the top of which, in the months of May, June, and July, about midnight, is seen something that shines and sparkles admirably, and which is often seen a great way off. It hath shined more brightly before than it does now, and though many have climbed up the hill, and attempted to search for it, yet they could find nothing. The vulgar talk of it as some enchanted carbuncle, but I take it rather to be some water sliding down the face of a smooth rock, which, when the sun, at such a time, shines upon, the reflection causeth that admirable splendour."—DR. WALLACE'S *Description of the Islands of Orkney*, 12mo, 1700, p. 52.

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not with reproach—he is with us—he hears us even now."

Brenda started from her seat.—"I will to Euphane Fea's chamber," she said, "and leave you, Minna and Norna, to finish your stories of hobgoblins and of dwarfs at your own leisure; I care not for them at any time, but I will not endure them at midnight, and by this pale lamplight."

She was accordingly in the act of leaving the room, when her sister detained her.

"Is this the courage," she said, "of her, that disbelieves whatever the history of our fathers tells us of supernatural prodigy? What Norna has to tell concerns the fate, perhaps, of our father and his house;—if I can listen to it, trusting that God and my innocence will protect me from all that is malignant, you, Brenda, who believe not in such influence, have surely no cause to tremble. Credit me, that for the guiltless there is no fear."

"There may be no danger," said Brenda, unable to suppress her natural turn for humour, "but as the old jest-book says, there is much fear. However, Minna, I will stay with you;—the rather," she added, in a whisper, "that I am loath to leave you alone with this frightful woman, and that I have a dark staircase and long passage betwixt and Euphane Fea, else I would have her here ere I were five minutes older."

"Call no one hither, maiden, upon peril of thy life," said Norna, "and interrupt not my tale again; for it cannot and must not be told after that charmed light has ceased to burn."

"And I thank Heaven," said Brenda to herself, "that the oil burns low in the cruize! I am sorely tempted to

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lend it a puff, but then Norna would be alone with us in the dark, and that would be worse."

So saying, she submitted to her fate, and sat down, determined to listen with all the equanimity which she could command to the remaining part of Norna's tale, which went on as follows:—

"It happened on a hot summer day, and just about the hour of noon," continued Norna, "as I sat by the Dwarfie Stone, with my eyes fixed on the Ward-hill, whence the mysterious and ever-burning carbuncle shed its rays more brightly than usual, and repined in my heart at the restricted bounds of human knowledge, that at length I could not help exclaiming, in the words of an ancient Saga—

'Dwellers of the mountain, rise,
Trolld the powerful, Haims the wise!
Ye who taught weak woman's tongue
Words that sway the wise and strong,—
Ye who taught weak woman's hand
How to wield the magic wand,
And wake the gales on Foulah's steep,
Or lull wild Sumburgh's waves to sleep!
Still are ye yet?—Not yours the power
Ye knew in Odin's mightier hour.
What are ye now but empty names,
Powerful Trolld, sagacious Haims,
That, lightly spoken, lightly heard,
Float on the air like thistle's beard?'

"I had scarce uttered these words," proceeded Norna, "ere the sky, which had been till then unusually clear, grew so suddenly dark around me, that it seemed more like midnight than noon. A single flash of lightning showed me at once the desolate landscape of heath, morass, mountain, and precipice, which lay around; a single clap of thunder wakened all the echoes of the Ward-hill,

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which continued so long to repeat the sound, that it seemed some rock, rent by the thunderbolt from the summit, was rolling over cliff and precipice into the valley. Immediately after, fell a burst of rain so violent, that I was fain to shun its pelting, by creeping into the interior of the mysterious stone.

"I seated myself on the larger stone couch, which is cut at the farther end of the cavity, and, with my eyes fixed on the smaller bed, wearied myself with conjectures respecting the origin and purpose of my singular place of refuge. Had it been really the work of that powerful Trolld, to whom the poetry of the Scalds referred it? Or was it the tomb of some Scandinavian chief, interred with his arms and his wealth, perhaps also with his immolated wife, that what he loved best in life might not in death be divided from him? Or was it the abode of penance, chosen by some devoted anchorite of later days? Or the idle work of some wandering mechanic, whom chance, and whim, and leisure, had thrust upon such an undertaking? I tell you the thoughts that then floated through my brain, that ye may know that what ensued was not the vision of a prejudiced or prepossessed imagination, but an apparition, as certain as it was awful.

"Sleep had gradually crept on me, amidst my lucubrations, when I was startled from my slumbers by a second clap of thunder; and, when I awoke, I saw, through the dim light which the upper aperture admitted, the unshapely and indistinct form of Trolld the dwarf, seated opposite to me on the lesser couch, which his square and misshapen bulk seemed absolutely to fill up. I was startled, but not affrighted; for the blood of the ancient race of Lochlin was warm in my veins. He spoke; and his words were of Norse, so old, that few, save my father,

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or I myself, could have comprehended their import,—such language as was spoken in these islands ere Olave planted the cross on the ruins of heathenism. His meaning was dark also and obscure, like that which the Pagan priests were wont to deliver, in the name of their idols, to the tribes that assembled at the *Helgafels.** This was the import,—

'A thousand winters dark have flown,
Since o'er the threshold of my Stone
A votaress pass'd, my power to own.
Visitor bold
Of the mansion of Trolld,
Maiden haughty of heart,
Who hast hither presumed,—
Ungifted, undoom'd,
Thou shalt not depart;
The power thou dost covet
O'er tempest and wave,
Shall be thine, thou proud maiden,
By beach and by cave,—
By stack † and by skerry,‡ by noup,§ and by voe,‖
By air ¶ and by wick,** and by helyer †† and gio, ‡‡
And by every wild shore which the northern winds know,
And the northern tides lave.
But though this shall be given thee, thou desperately brave,
I doom thee that never the gift thou shalt have,
Till thou reave thy life's giver
Of the gift which he gave.'

* Or consecrated mountain, used by the Scandinavian priests for the purposes of their idol-worship.

† *Stack.* A precipitous rock, rising out of the sea.

‡ *Skerry.* A flat insulated rock, not subject to the overflowing of the sea.

§ *Noup.* A round-headed eminence.

‖ *Voe.* A creek or inlet of the sea.

¶ *Air.* An open sea-beach.

** *Wick.* An open bay.

†† *Helyer.* A cavern into which the tide flows.

‡‡ *Gio.* A deep ravine which admits the sea.

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"I answered him in nearly the same strain; for the spirit of the ancient Scalds of our race was upon me, and, far from fearing the phantom, with whom I sat cooped within so narrow a space, I felt the impulse of that high courage which thrust the ancient Champions and Druidesses upon contests with the invisible world, when they thought that the earth no longer contained enemies worthy to be subdued by them. Therefore did I answer him thus:—

'Dark are thy words, and severe,
Thou dweller in the stone;
But trembling and fear
To her are unknown,
Who hath sought thee here,
In thy dwelling lone.
Come what comes soever,
The worst I can endure;
Life is but a short fever,
And Death is the cure.'

"The Demon scowled at me, as if at once incensed and overawed; and then, coiling himself up in a thick and sulphureous vapour, he disappeared from his place. I did not, till that moment, feel the influence of fright, but then it seized me. I rushed into the open air, where the tempest had passed away, and all was pure and serene. After a moment's breathless pause, I hasted home, musing by the way on the words of the phantom, which I could not, as often happens, recall so distinctly to memory at the time, as I have been since able to do.

"It may seem strange that such an apparition should, in time, have glided from my mind, like a vision of the night—but so it was. I brought myself to believe it the work of fancy—I thought I had lived too much in solitude, and had given way too much to the feelings inspired

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by my favourite studies. I abandoned them for a time, and I mixed with the youth of my age. I was upon a visit at Kirkwall when I learned to know your father, whom business had brought thither. He easily found access to the relation with whom I lived, who was anxious to compose, if possible, the feud which divided our families. Your father, maidens, has been rather hardened than changed by years—he had the same manly form, the same old Norse frankness of manner and of heart, the same upright courage and honesty of disposition, with more of the gentle ingenuousness of youth, an eager desire to please, a willingness to be pleased, and a vivacity of spirits which survives not our early years. But though he was thus worthy of love, and though Erland wrote to me, authorizing his attachment, there was another—a stranger, Minna, a fatal stranger—full of arts unknown to us, and graces which to the plain manners of your father were unknown. Yes, he walked, indeed, among us like a being of another and of a superior race.—Ye look on me as if it were strange that I should have had attractions for such a lover; but I present nothing that can remind you that Norna of the Fitful-head was once admired and loved as Ulla Troil—the change betwixt the animated body and the corpse after decease, is scarce more awful and absolute than I have sustained, while I yet linger on earth. Look on me, maidens—look on me by this glimmering light—Can ye believe that these haggard and weather-wasted features—these eyes, which have been almost converted to stone, by looking upon sights of terror—these locks, that, mingled with gray, now stream out, the shattered pennons of a sinking vessel—that these, and she to whom they belong, could once be the objects of fond affection?—But the waning lamp sinks

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fast, and let it sink while I tell my infamy.—We loved in secret, we met in secret, till I gave the last proof of fatal and of guilty passion!—And now beam out, thou magic glimmer—shine out a little space, thou flame so powerful even in thy feebleness—bid him who hovers near us, keep his dark pinions aloof from the circle thou dost illuminate—live but a little till the worst be told, and then sink when thou wilt into darkness, as black as my guilt and sorrow!"

While she spoke thus, she drew together the remaining nutriment of the lamp, and trimmed its decaying flame; then again, with a hollow voice, and in broken sentences, pursued her narrative.

"I must waste little time in words. My love was discovered, but not my guilt. Erland came to Pomona in anger, and transported me to our solitary dwelling in Hoy. He commanded me to see my lover no more, and to receive Magnus, in whom he was willing to forgive the offences of his father, as my future husband. Alas! I no longer deserved his attachment—my only wish was to escape from my father's dwelling, to conceal my shame in my lover's arms. Let me do him justice—he was faithful—too, too faithful—his perfidy would have bereft me of my senses; but the fatal consequences of his fidelity have done me a tenfold injury."

She paused, and then resumed, with the wild tone of insanity, "It has made me the powerful and the despairing Sovereign of the Seas and Winds!"

She paused a second time after this wild exclamation, and resumed her narrative in a more composed manner.

"My lover came in secret to Hoy, to concert measures for my flight, and I agreed to meet him, that we might fix the time when his vessel should come into the Sound. I left the house at midnight."

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Here she appeared to gasp with agony, and went on with her tale by broken and interrupted sentences. "I left the house at midnight—I had to pass my father's door, and I perceived it was open—I thought he watched us, and, that the sound of my steps might not break his slumbers, I closed the fatal door—a light and trivial action—but, God in heaven! what were the consequences!—At morn, the room was full of suffocating vapour—my father was dead—dead through my act—dead through my disobedience—dead through my infamy! All that follows is mist and darkness—a choking, suffocating, stifling mist envelopes all that I said and did, all that was said and done, until I became assured that my doom was accomplished, and walked forth the calm and terrible being you now behold me—the Queen of the Elements—the sharer in the power of those beings to whom man and his passions give such sport as the tortures of the dog-fish afford the fisherman, when he pierces his eyes with thorns, and turns him once more into his native element, to traverse the waves in blindness and agony.* No, maidens, she whom you see before you is impassive to the follies of which your minds are the sport. I am she that have made the offering—I am she that bereaved the giver of the gift of life which he gave me—the dark saying has been interpreted by my deed, and I am taken from humanity, to be something pre-eminently powerful, pre-eminently wretched!"

As she spoke thus, the light, which had been long quivering, leaped high for an instant, and seemed about to expire, when Norna, interrupting herself, said hastily, "No more now—he comes—he comes—Enough that ye

* This cruelty is practised by some fishers, out of a vindictive hatred to these ravenous fishes.

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know me, and the right I have to advise and command you.—Approach now, proud Spirit! if thou wilt."

So saying, she extinguished the lamp, and passed out of the apartment with her usual loftiness of step, as Minna could observe from its measured cadence.

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CHAPTER XX.

> Is all the counsel that we two have shared—
> The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
> When we have chid the hasty-footed time
> For parting us—O, and is all forgot?
>
> MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

THE attention of Minna was powerfully arrested by this tale of terror, which accorded with and explained many broken hints respecting Norna, which she had heard from her father and other near relations, and she was for a time so lost in surprise, not unmingled with horror, that she did not even attempt to speak to her sister Brenda. When, at length, she called her by her name, she received no answer, and, on touching her hand, she found it cold as ice. Alarmed to the uttermost, she threw open the lattice and the window-shutters, and admitted at once the free air and the pale glimmer of the hyperborean summer night. She then became sensible that her sister was in a swoon. All thoughts concerning Norna, her frightful tale, and her mysterious connexion with the invisible world, at once vanished from Minna's thoughts, and she hastily ran to the apartment of the old housekeeper, to summon her aid, without reflecting for a moment what sights she might encounter in the long dark passages which she had to traverse.

The old woman hastened to Brenda's assistance, and

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instantly applied such remedies as her experience suggested; but the poor girl's nervous system had been so much agitated by the horrible tale she had just heard, that, when recovered from her swoon, her utmost endeavours to compose her mind could not prevent her falling into a hysterical fit of some duration. This also was subdued by the experience of old Euphane Fea, who was well versed in all the simple pharmacy used by the natives of Zetland, and who, after administering a composing draught, distilled from simples and wild flowers, at length saw her patient resigned to sleep. Minna stretched herself beside her sister, kissed her cheek, and courted slumber in her turn; but the more she invoked it, the farther it seemed to fly from her eyelids; and if at times she was disposed to sink into repose, the voice of the involuntary parricide seemed again to sound in her ears, and startled her into consciousness.

The early morning hour at which they were accustomed to rise, found the state of the sisters different from what might have been expected. A sound sleep had restored the spirit of Brenda's lightsome eye and the rose on her laughing cheek; the transient indisposition of the preceding night having left as little trouble on her look, as the fantastic terrors of Norna's tale had been able to impress on her imagination. The looks of Minna, on the contrary, were melancholy, downcast, and apparently exhausted by watching and anxiety. They said at first little to each other, as if afraid of touching a subject so fraught with emotion as the scene of the preceding night. It was not until they had performed together their devotions, as usual, that Brenda, while lacing Minna's boddice, (for they rendered the services of the toilet to each other reciprocally,) became aware of the paleness of her sister's

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looks; and having ascertained, by a glance at the mirror, that her own did not wear the same dejection, she kissed Minna's cheek, and said affectionately, "Claud Halcro was right, my dearest sister, when his poetical folly gave us these names of Night and Day."

"And wherefore should you say so now?" said Minna.

"Because we each are bravest in the season that we take our name from; I was frightened well-nigh to death, by hearing those things last night, which you endured with courageous firmness; and now, when it is broad light, I can think of them with composure, while you look as pale as a spirit who is surprised by sunrise."

"You are lucky, Brenda," said her sister, gravely, "who can so soon forget such a tale of wonder and horror."

"The horror," said Brenda, "is never to be forgotten, unless one could hope that the unfortunate woman's excited imagination, which shows itself so active in conjuring up apparitions, may have fixed on her an imaginary crime."

"You believe nothing, then," said Minna, "of her interview at the Dwarfie Stone, that wondrous place, of which so many tales are told, and which, for so many centuries, has been reverenced as the work of a demon, and as his abode?"

"I believe," said Brenda, "that our unhappy relative is no impostor,—and therefore I believe that she was at the Dwarfie Stone during a thunder-storm, that she sought shelter in it, and that, during a swoon, or during sleep perhaps, some dream visited her, concerned with the popular traditions with which she was so conversant; but I cannot easily believe more."

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"And yet the event," said Minna, "corresponded to the dark intimations of the vision."

"Pardon me," said Brenda, "I rather think the dream would never have been put into shape, or perhaps remembered at all, but for the event. She told us herself she had nearly forgot the vision, till after her father's dreadful death,—and who shall warrant how much of what she then supposed herself to remember was not the creation of her own fancy, disordered as it naturally was, by the horrid accident? Had she really seen and conversed with a necromantic dwarf, she was likely to remember the conversation long enough—at least, I am sure I should."

"Brenda," replied Minna, "you have heard the good minister of the Cross-Kirk say, that human wisdom was worse than folly, when it was applied to mysteries beyond its comprehension; and that, if we believed no more than we could understand, we should resist the evidence of our senses, which presented us, at every turn, circumstances as certain as they were unintelligible."

"You are too learned yourself, sister," answered Brenda, "to need the assistance of the good minister of Cross-Kirk; but I think his doctrine only related to the mysteries of our religion, which it is our duty to receive without investigation or doubt—but in things occurring in common life, as God has bestowed reason upon us, we cannot act wrong in employing it. But you, my dear Minna, have a warmer fancy than mine, and are willing to receive all those wonderful stories for truth, because you love to think of sorcerers, and dwarfs, and water-spirits, and would like much to have a little trow, or fairy, as the Scotch call them, with a green coat, and a pair of wings as brilliant as the hues of the starling's neck, specially to attend on you."

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"It would spare you at least the trouble of lacing my boddice," said Minna, "and of lacing it wrong, too; for in the heat of your argument you have missed two eyelet holes."

"That error shall be presently mended," said Brenda; "and then, as one of our friends might say, I will haul tight and belay—but you draw your breath so deeply, that it will be a difficult matter."

"I only sighed," said Minna, in some confusion, "to think how soon you can trifle with and ridicule the misfortunes of this extraordinary woman."

"I do not ridicule them, God knows!" replied Brenda somewhat angrily; "it is you, Minna, who turn all I say in truth and kindness, to something harsh or wicked. I look on Norna as a woman of very extraordinary abilities, which are very often reconciled with a strong cast of insanity; and I consider her as better skilled in the signs of the weather than any woman in Zetland. But that she has any power over the elements, I no more believe, than I do in the nursery stories of King Erick, who could make the wind blow from the point he set his cap to."

Minna, somewhat nettled with the obstinate incredulity of her sister, replied sharply, "And yet, Brenda, this woman—half-mad woman, and the veriest impostor—is the person by whom you choose to be advised in the matter next your own heart at this moment!"

"I do not know what you mean," said Brenda, colouring deeply, and shifting to get away from her sister. But as she was now undergoing the ceremony of being laced in her turn, her sister had the means of holding her fast by the silken string with which she was fastening the boddice, and, tapping her on the neck, which expressed,

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by its sudden writhe, and sudden change to a scarlet hue, as much pettish confusion as she had desire to provoke, she added, more mildly, "Is it not strange, Brenda, that, used as we have been by the stranger Mordaunt Mertoun, whose assurance has brought him uninvited to a house where his presence is so unacceptable, you should still look on or think of him with favour? Surely that you do so should be a proof to you, that there are such things as spells in the country, and that you yourself labour under them. It is not for nought that Mordaunt wears a chain of elfin gold—look to it, Brenda, and be wise in time."

"I have nothing to do with Mordaunt Mertoun," answered Brenda, hastily, "nor do I know or care what he or any other young man wears about his neck. I could see all the gold chains of all the bailies of Edinburgh, that Lady Glowrowrum speaks so much of, without falling in fancy with one of the wearers." And, having thus complied with the female rule of pleading not guilty in general to such an indictment, she immediately resumed, in a different tone, "But to say the truth, Minna, I think you, and all of you, have judged far too hastily about this young friend of ours, who has been so long our most intimate companion. Mind, Mordaunt Mertoun is no more to me than he is to you—who best know how little difference he made betwixt us; and that, chain or no chain, he lived with us like a brother with two sisters; and yet you can turn him off at once, because a wandering seaman, of whom we know nothing, and a peddling jagger, whom we well know to be a thief, a cheat, and a liar, speak words and carry tales in his disfavour! I do not believe he ever said he could have his choice of either of us, and only waited to see which was

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to have Burgh-Westra and Bredness Voe—I do not believe he ever spoke such a word, or harboured such a thought, as that of making a choice between us."

"Perhaps," said Minna, coldly, "you may have had reason to know that his choice was already determined."

"I will not endure this," said Brenda, giving way to her natural vivacity, and springing from between her sister's hands; then turning round and facing her, while her glowing cheek was rivalled in the deepness of its crimson, by as much of her neck and bosom as the upper part of the half-laced boddice permitted to be visible,—"Even from you, Minna," she said, "I will not endure this! You know that all my life I have spoken the truth, and that I love the truth; and I tell you that Mordaunt Mertoun never in his life made distinction betwixt you and me until——"

Here some feeling of consciousness stopped her short, and her sister replied, with a smile, "Until *when*, Brenda? Methinks your love of truth seems choked with the sentence you were bringing out."

"Until you ceased to do him the justice he deserves," said Brenda, firmly, "since I must speak out. I have little doubt that he will not long throw away his friendship on you, who hold it so lightly."

"Be it so," said Minna; "you are secure from my rivalry, either in his love or friendship. But bethink you better, Brenda—this is no scandal of Cleveland's—Cleveland is incapable of slander—no falsehood of Bryce Snailsfoot—not one of our friends or acquaintance but says it has been the common talk of the island, that the daughters of Magnus Troil were patiently awaiting the choice of the nameless and birthless stranger, Mordaunt Mertoun.—Is it fitting that this should be said of us, the

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descendants of a Norwegian Jarl, and the daughters of the first Udaller in Zetland? or, would it be modest or maidenly to submit to it unresented, were we the meanest lasses that ever lifted a milk-pail?"

"The tongues of fools are no reproach," replied Brenda, warmly; "I will never quit my own thoughts of an innocent friend for the gossip of the island, which can put the worst meaning on the most innocent actions."

"Hear but what our friends say," repeated Minna; "hear but the Lady Glowrowrum; hear but Maddie and Clara Groatsettar."

"If I were to hear Lady Glowrowrum," said Brenda, steadily, "I should listen to the worst tongue in Zetland; and as for Maddie and Clara Groatsettar, they were both blithe enough to get Mordaunt to sit betwixt them at dinner the day before yesterday, as you might have observed yourself, but that your ear was better engaged."

"Your eyes, at least, have been but indifferently engaged, Brenda," retorted the elder sister, "since they were fixed on a young man, whom all the world but yourself believes to have talked of us with the most insolent presumption; and even if he be innocently charged, Lady Glowrowrum says it is unmaidenly and bold of you even to look in the direction where he sits, knowing it must confirm such reports."

"I will look which way I please," said Brenda, growing still warmer; "Lady Glowrowrum shall neither rule my thoughts, nor my words, nor my eyes. I hold Mordaunt Mertoun to be innocent,—I will look at him as such,—I will speak of him as such; and if I did not speak to him also, and behave to him as usual, it is in obedience to my father, and not for what Lady Glowrowrum, and all her nieces, had she twenty instead of two, could think,

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wink, nod, or tattle, about the matter that concerns them not."

"Alas! Brenda," answered Minna, with calmness, "this vivacity is more than is required for the defence of the character of a mere friend!—Beware—He who ruined Norna's peace for ever, was a stranger, admitted to her affections against the will of her family."

"He was a stranger," replied Brenda, with emphasis, "not only in birth, but in manners. She had not been bred up with him from her youth,—she had not known the gentleness, the frankness, of his disposition, by an intimacy of many years. He was indeed a stranger, in character, temper, birth, manners, and morals,—some wandering adventurer, perhaps, whom chance or tempest had thrown upon the islands, and who knew how to mask a false heart with a frank brow. My good sister, take home your own warning. There are other strangers at Burgh-Westra besides this poor Mordaunt Mertoun."

Minna seemed for a moment overwhelmed with the rapidity with which her sister retorted her suspicion and her caution. But her natural loftiness of disposition enabled her to reply with assumed composure.

"Were I to treat you, Brenda, with the want of confidence you show towards me, I might reply, that Cleveland is no more to me than Mordaunt was; or than young Swaraster, or Lawrence Ericson, or any other favourite guest of my father's, now is. But I scorn to deceive you, or to disguise my thoughts.—I love Clement Cleveland."

"Do not say so, my dearest sister," said Brenda, abandoning at once the air of acrimony with which the conversation had been latterly conducted, and throwing her arms round her sister's neck, with looks, and with a tone

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of the most earnest affection,—"do not say so, I implore you! I will renounce Mordaunt Mertoun,—I will swear never to speak to him again; but do not repeat that you love this Cleveland!"

"And why should I not repeat," said Minna, disengaging herself gently from her sister's grasp, "a sentiment in which I glory? The boldness, the strength and energy, of his character, to which command is natural, and fear unknown,—these very properties, which alarm you for my happiness, are the qualities which ensure it. Remember, Brenda, that when your foot loved the calm smooth sea-beach of the summer sea, mine ever delighted in the summit of the precipice, when the waves were in fury."

"And it is even that which I dread," said Brenda; "it is even that adventurous disposition which now is urging you to the brink of a precipice more dangerous than ever was washed by a spring-tide. This man,—do not frown, I will say no slander of him,—but is he not, even in your own partial judgment, stern and overbearing? accustomed, as you say, to command; but, for that very reason, commanding where he has no right to do so, and leading whom it would most become him to follow? rushing on danger, rather for its own sake, than for any other object? And can you think of being yoked with a spirit so unsettled and stormy, whose life has hitherto been led in scenes of death and peril, and who, even while sitting by your side, cannot disguise his impatience again to engage in them? A lover, methinks, should love his mistress better than his own life; but yours, my dear Minna, loves her less than the pleasure of inflicting death on others."

"And it is even for that I love him," said Minna. "I

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am a daughter of the old dames of Norway, who could send their lovers to battle with a smile, and slay them with their own hands, if they returned with dishonour. My lover must scorn the mockeries by which our degraded race strive for distinction, or must practise them only in sport, and in earnest of nobler dangers. No whale-striking, bird-nesting favourite for me; my lover must be a Sea-king, or what else modern times may give that draws near to that lofty character."

"Alas, my sister!" said Brenda, "it is now that I must in earnest begin to believe the force of spells and of charms. You remember the Spanish story which you took from me long since, because I said, in your admiration of the chivalry of the olden times of Scandinavia, you rivalled the extravagance of the hero. Ah, Minna! your colour shows that your conscience checks you, and reminds you of the book I mean;—is it more wise, think you, to mistake a windmill for a giant, or the commander of a paltry corsair for a Kiempe, or a Vi-king?"

Minna did indeed colour with anger at this insinuation, of which, perhaps, she felt in some degree the truth.

"You have a right," she said, "to insult me because you are possessed of my secret."

Brenda's soft heart could not resist this charge of unkindness; she adjured her sister to pardon her, and the natural gentleness of Minna's feelings could not resist her entreaties.

"We are unhappy," she said, as she dried her sister's tears, "that we cannot see with the same eyes—let us not make each other more so by mutual insult and unkindness. You have my secret—It will not, perhaps, long be one, for my father shall have the confidence to which he is entitled, so soon as certain circumstances will permit

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me to offer it. Meantime, I repeat, you have my secret, and I more than suspect that I have yours in exchange, though you refuse to own it."

"How, Minna!" said Brenda; "would you have me acknowledge for any one such feelings as you allude to, ere he has said the least word that could justify such a confession?"

"Surely not; but a hidden fire may be distinguished by heat as well as flame."

"You understand these signs, Minna," said Brenda, hanging down her head, and in vain endeavouring to suppress the temptation to repartee which her sister's remark offered; "but I can only say, that, if ever I love at all, it shall not be until I have been asked to do so once or twice at least, which has not yet chanced to me. But do not let us renew our quarrel, and rather let us think why Norna should have told us that horrible tale, and to what she expects it should lead."

"It must have been as a caution," replied Minna—"a caution which our situation, and, I will not deny it, which mine in particular, might seem to her to call for;—but I am alike strong in my own innocence, and in the honour of Cleveland."

Brenda would fain have replied, that she did not confide so absolutely in the latter security as in the first;—but she was prudent, and, forbearing to awaken the former painful discussion, only replied, "It is strange that Norna should have said nothing more of her lover. Surely he could not desert her in the extremity of misery to which he had reduced her?"

"There may be agonies of distress," said Minna, after a pause, "in which the mind is so much jarred, that it ceases to be responsive even to the feelings which have

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most engrossed it;—her sorrow for her lover may have been swallowed up in horror and despair."

"Or he may have fled from the islands, in fear of our father's vengeance," said Brenda.

"If for fear, or faintness of heart," said Minna, looking upwards, "he was capable of flying from the ruin which he had occasioned, I trust he has long ere this sustained the punishment which Heaven reserves for the most base and dastardly of traitors and of cowards. Come, sister, we are ere this expected at the breakfast board."

And they went thither, arm in arm, with much more of confidence than had lately subsisted between them; the little quarrel which had taken place having served the purpose of a *bourasque*, or sudden squall, which dispels mists and vapours, and leaves fair weather behind it.

On their way to the breakfast apartment, they agreed that it was unnecessary, and might be imprudent, to communicate to their father the circumstance of the nocturnal visit, or to let him observe that they now knew more than formerly of the melancholy history of Norna.

END OF VOL. I.

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